

HOREBBUND UND MOABBUND

Ihre Einheit und Verschiedenheit nach Dtn 5,1-5 und 29,1-8*

Mose blickt in seiner Eröffnungsrede zu Beginn des Buches Deuteronomium auf den gemeinsamen Weg vom Horeb bis nach Moab, dem gegenwärtigen Aufenthaltsort, zurück¹. Er erzählt, wie Gott befahl, ins Bergland der Amoriter aufzubrechen und das zugeschworene und nun ausgelieferte Land in Besitz zu nehmen. An seiner Schwelle in Kadesch-Barnea angekommen forderte Mose deshalb das Volk auf, mit der Eroberung des Landes, das Gott ihm übereignet hatte, zu beginnen. Doch die Israeliten wollten zunächst Kundschafter ausschicken. Mose billigte diesen Vorschlag, obwohl Gott dazu keinen Auftrag gegeben hatte. Dieses Einverständnis Moses mit der Verzögerung der Landnahme durch eine Spähtruppaktion ersetzte also den göttlichen Plan der Landschenkung durch eine menschliche Kriegstechnik. Aufgrund dieser Eigenmächtigkeit wurde Mose mitverantwortlich für die anschließende Sünde des Volkes. Der Bericht der zurückgekehrten Kundschafter war zwar ermutigend. Aber die Reaktion der Israeliten entlarvte ihren bisher versteckten Ungehorsam. Sie ideologisierten ihr Murren durch ein Anti-Credo, das Gott verleumdete und zur Apologie ihres Unglaubens wurde. Mose erinnerte sie zwar daran, dass Gott gegen die Ägypter gekämpft und in der Wüste stets väterlich für sie gesorgt hatte. Dennoch weigerten sie sich, ihre Geschichte als von der Treue Gottes gewirkt zu begreifen. Zur Strafe mussten die wehrfähigen Männer der Exodus-Horeb-Generation deshalb in den folgenden achtunddreißig Jahren Wüstenwanderung aussterben. Auch Mose, der nicht gegen Gott gesündigt, sich aber auf das Verhalten des Volkes eingelassen und dadurch mitschuldig gemacht hatte, darf das Verheißungsland nicht betreten. Zwar führte er nach dem Tod der Sündergeneration die nächste Generation noch durch das Ostjordanland und eroberte die Königreiche Sihons und Ogs. Jetzt aber muss er seine beiden wichtigsten, noch unerledigten Aufgaben, die Eroberung des Westjordanlandes und dessen Verteilung auf die Stämme, Josua übergeben.

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¹ Vgl. zum Folgenden Norbert LOHFINK, „Narrative Analyse von Dtn 1,6-3,29“, *Studien zum Deuteronomium und zur deuteronomistischen Literatur V* (SBAB 38; Stuttgart 2005) 57-110.

Der eben skizzierte Rückblick Moses in Kap. 1–3 bildet die Exposition für das, was nun am Deuteronomiumstag in Moab (vgl. 1,3) geschehen soll. Mit seiner Erzählung möchte Mose seinen Zuhörern letztlich verständlich machen, warum er „heute“, das heißt an seinem Lebensende, Josua einsetzen wird. Seine Beauftragung mit der Leitung des Volkes muss, auch wenn das zunächst nicht ausdrücklich gesagt wird, im Rahmen einer neuen Bundesschlusszeremonie geschehen, die den Gottesbund vom Horeb einbezieht und übertrifft ². Ab Kap. 4 schließt Mose die Exodus-Horeb-Generation mit der nächsten, „heute“ (4,4.8) in Moab versammelten Generation zusammen (4,9-10.20). Auch gibt er in diesem Text bereits eine Art interpretierender Einführung in die Urkunde des Bundes und leitet seinen Neuvollzug formell ein (vgl. 4,5.26). Nach 5,2-3 geht es trotz des zeitlichen und räumlichen Abstands zum Gründungsakt im Horebbund um eine Identität mit dem Moabbund. Dagegen betont 28,69 einen Unterschied zwischen beiden Bundesschlüssen. Die Kap. 5–28 enthalten in einem nicht weiter differenzierten Sinn die deuteronomische Tora, die beansprucht, auf den Horebbund vor 40 Jahren zurückzugehen. Sie verbindet den Dekalog mit seiner Auslegung für das Leben im Land und dient dem Moabbund als niedergeschriebenes Bundesdokument. Die Kap. 29–32 bringen Ergänzungen im Wortlaut der zeremoniellen Durchführung des Vereidigungsverfahrens in Moab.

Mein Artikel möchte einen Beitrag zur Verhältnisbestimmung von Horeb- und Moabbund leisten. Dabei beschränke ich mich auf die Texteröffnungen der Tora (5,1-5) und der „Bundesworte“ (29,1-8). Ihre Stellung am Anfang des zweiten (Kap. 5–28) bzw. dritten Buchteils (Kap. 29–32) spricht dafür, dass sie — wie schon zuvor 1,6-8 zu Beginn des ersten Buchteils (Kap. 1–4) ³ — jeweils das Ganze, das ihnen folgt, charakterisieren. Dabei beantworten sie zwei Fragen: Weshalb kann Mose das „heute“ in Moab versammelte Israel bei der Verlesung des Vertragsdokuments als die Generation betrachten, mit der YHWH bereits am Horeb einen

² D. MARKL, *Gottes Volk im Deuteronomium* (BZABR 18; Wiesbaden 2012) 123-125, führt verschiedene Gründe für den „Moabbund als überbietende Transformation des Horebbundes“ an, die „sich indirekt erschließen“ lassen. Unerwähnt bleibt allerdings der entscheidende Auslöser, nämlich die Schuld Moses, derentwegen er außerhalb des verheißenen Landes sterben und die Führung des Volkes Josua übertragen muss — ein Prozess, den Kap. 1–3 und 31 darstellen — s. dazu G. BRAULIK – N. LOHFINK, *Sprache und literarische Gestalt des Buches Deuteronomium*. Beobachtungen und Studien (ÖBS 53; Berlin 2021) 439-456.

³ Zur Funktion dieser Perikope unmittelbar nach der Überschrift des ersten Buchteils in 1,1-5 vgl. B.T. ARNOLD, „Reexamining the ‚Fathers‘ in Deuteronomy’s Framework“, *Torah and Tradition*. Papers Read at the Sixteenth Joint Meeting of the Society for Old Testament Study and the Old Testamentisch Werkgezelschap (eds. K. SPRONK – H. BARSTAD) (OTS 70; Leiden 2017) 10-41, hier 33-38.

Bund schloss? Und warum kann YHWH trotz der Empörungen Israels, die vom Auszug in Ägypten und vor allem vom Bundesbruch am Horeb an die gesamte Wüstenzeit (9,7-24) bis Bet-Pegor (4,3-4) durchzogen, seine Zusage, der Gott dieses Volkes zu sein, im Bundeschluss von Moab bestätigen, der wiederum Ort und Zeit überschreitend auch die in Moab „heute“ nicht anwesenden Generationen einschließt?

I. WAS DIE BEIDEN TEXTERÖFFNUNGEN VERBINDET

Die Perikopen 5,1-5 und 29,1-8 nehmen im Aufbau des Deuteronomiums einen analogen Platz ein. Der Bucherzähler lässt Ihnen mit 4,44-49 bzw. 28,69 die Überschriften des zweiten bzw. dritten Buchteils vorausgehen⁴. Im Anschluss daran leitet er jeweils eine Moserede ein, an deren Beginn dann die beiden Texteröffnungen stehen. Dazu nun im Einzelnen.

In 4,44-49 kündigt der Bucherzähler zunächst ein Dokument an, das Mose vorgetragen habe — die Tora, insbesondere ihre Hauptelemente „Eidesbestimmungen, Gesetze und Rechtsentscheide“ (vv. 44-45). Erst im späteren Verlauf des Deuteronomiums wird klar werden, dass Mose bereits in seiner Rede eine Niederschrift vorlas, auf die er verweisen konnte (vgl. z.B. 28,58.61)⁵. Die weiteren Angaben der Überschrift wirken wie ein Konglomerat divergierender Aussagen, die sich inhaltlich vor allem auf die Kap. 1–4 zurückbeziehen. In Moab also, „in der Talschlucht gegenüber Bet-Pegor“ (4,46), und unmittelbar vor dem Betreten des Verheißungslandes lässt der Bucherzähler schließlich in 5,1a Mose eine formell rechtsgültige Vollversammlung von „ganz Israel“ einberufen (*wayyiqrā' ʾel kāl yiśrāʾēl*)⁶. Damit beginnt ein Lernvorgang (5,1b), dessen idealtypische Schritte sich im folgenden Verbalgerüst spiegeln (vgl. 31,11-12):

⁴ Vgl. N. LOHFINK, „Die An- und Absageformel in der hebräischen Bibel. Zum Hintergrund des deuteronomischen Vierüberschriftensystems“, *Biblical and Oriental Essays in Memory of William L. Moran* (ed. A. GIANITO) (BibOr 48; Roma 2005) 49-77. Zur Auseinandersetzung mit anderen Auffassungen s. BRAULIK – LOHFINK, *Sprache und literarische Gestalt*, 362-378.

⁵ Vgl. z.B. B.T. ARNOLD, „Deuteronomy's Book and Hammurapi's Stela. The Referent of 'This Šēper' in Deuteronomy 28:58“, *VT* 70 (2020) 1-18.

⁶ Zu *qr' ʾel* im Sinn von „einberufen, beordern“ vgl. z.B. Gen 49,1; Ex 34,31; 36,2; Jos 10,24. Wo Mose in 4,10-14 die Theophanie am Horeb resümiert, nimmt er mit dem Zitat eines Gotteswortes in 4,10 bereits 5,1 vorweg: den Befehl nämlich, eine Volksversammlung einzuberufen und so das Geschehen in Gang zu bringen. Vgl. N. LOHFINK, „Deuteronomium 5 als Erzählung“, *Studien zum Deuteronomium und zur deuteronomistischen Literatur V* (SBAB 38; Stuttgart 2005) 111-130, hier 117. Nach 5,22 sprach Gott den Dekalog zu „eurer vollzähligen Versammlung“. Später beziehen sich die Rückblenden auf Krise und Vollendung des Bundesschlusses in 9,10 und 10,4 auf „den Tag der Versammlung“ am Horeb.

Mose fordert zum Hören auf, nennt das Thema und charakterisiert die rechtliche Situation, nämlich „heute“ (*hayyôm*), das heißt am Tag des Moabbundesschlusses, den Israeliten „die Gesetze und Rechtsentscheide“ offiziell zur Annahme vorzulegen (*dobēr b^e’āznêkæm hayyôm*)⁷. Sie werden im Folgenden an den Horeb als den Ort ihres Ursprungs und der Autorisierung Moses zu ihrer „belehrend-verpflichtenden“ Vermittlung zurückgebunden, die mehr als ein wörtliches Wiederholen des von Gott „Gesagten“ (5,31; 6,1) ist⁸. Die Ortsangabe von 5,2 „am Horeb“ verdeutlicht, dass die Worte jetzt an einem anderen Ort gesprochen werden. Ziel ihrer verbindlichen Mitteilung ist nach 5,1b, dass Israel sie auswendig lernt, sich also einprägt, und dadurch bewahrt, um sie später im Land zu verwirklichen (5,31). Vor der Paränese von 5,32 liegen dann 40 Jahre erzählte Zeit. 5,32a greift die Mahnung, zu „bewahren und halten“ von 5,1b auf. Zusammen mit 5,32b-33, der Aufforderung, vom „Weg“ des Dekalogs nicht abzuweichen⁹, rahmen diese Verse das Kap. 5. Innerhalb dieses Rahmens bilden 5,2-5 strukturell wie inhaltlich den ersten, auf den Dekalog in 5,6-22 ausgerichteten Abschnitt.

Dtn 28,69 hat keine „Überleitungsfunktion“¹⁰, sondern überschreibt den dritten Buchteil, die Kap. 29–32¹¹: „Das sind die Worte des Bundes“ [verdeutlichend: „Das sind die Worte, durch die der Bund geschlossen wurde“], den mit den Israeliten im Land Moab zu schließen YHWH Mose verpflichtet hat, zusätzlich zu dem Bund, den er (selbst) mit ihnen am Horeb geschlossen hatte“. „Die Wortes des Bundes“ (*dibrê habb^erît*) unterscheiden sich von der in 4,44 genannten Textgattung „Tora“. Sie gehören nicht zur Urkunde des Gottesbundes, die in Kap. 5–28 vorliegt, sondern beziehen sich auf rituelle, aber auch andere Worte und Handlungen¹²,

⁷ LOHFINK, „Deuteronomium 5“, 117. „Die Wendung, ‚in die Ohren von jemandem hinein sprechen‘ bedeutet: ‚jemandem etwas offiziell zur Annahme vorlegen‘“ — ebd., 118 Anm. 21. Die Wendung *dbr Piel b^e’āznayîm* ist von *qr’ b^e’āznayîm* zu unterscheiden, die das Verlesen einer schriftlichen Urkunde bezeichnet, vgl. z.B. Ex 24,7; Dtn 31,11; 2 Kön 23,2; Jer 36,6.10.13.14.15.20.21 und Neh 13,1.

⁸ Vgl. J.-P. SONNET, „The Fifth Book of the Pentateuch. Deuteronomy in Its Narrative Dynamic“, *JAJ* 3 (2012) 197-234, hier 206-207.

⁹ G. BRAULIK, „Die allgemeine Gesetzesparänese und das ‚paränetische Schema‘ im Buch Deuteronomium“, *Studien zu Buch und Sprache des Deuteronomiums* (SBAB 63; Stuttgart 2017) 271-299, hier 284.

¹⁰ Gegen E. OTTO, *Das Deuteronomium in Pentateuch und Hexateuch*. Studien zur Literaturgeschichte von Pentateuch und Hexateuch im Lichte des Deuteronomiumrahmens (FAT 30; Tübingen 2000) 139-141. Vgl. BRAULIK – LOHFINK, *Sprache und literarische Gestalt*, 303 Anm. 4.

¹¹ N. LOHFINK, „Dtn 28,69 — Überschrift oder Kolophon“, *Studien zum Deuteronomium und zur deuteronomistischen Literatur III* (SBAB 20; Stuttgart 1995) 279-291; ferner BRAULIK – LOHFINK, *Sprache und literarische Gestalt*, 372-378.

¹² *dābār* kann nicht nur „Wort“, sondern auch „Sache“, „Angelegenheit“ bedeuten — gegen J.H. TIGAY, *Deuteronomy Devarim* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia, PA –

die beim Moabbundesschluss neu zum Horebbundesschluss hinzukommen. Innerhalb des dritten Buchteils bilden die Kap. 29–30 eine Redereinheit und bringen Ergänzungen zur Tora vom Horeb. Sie werden durch 31,1–2a von 31,1 – 32,47 abgegrenzt, die weitere Vorgänge hinzufügen, die sich am Todestag Moses in Moab abspielten und die erst die volle Gestalt des Moabbundes schufen. Die Überschrift 28,69 betont bei den zwei Bundesschlüssen die Verschiedenheit ihrer Orte, nämlich Moab und Horeb, und der Personen, die jeweils die Israeliten verpflichten, nämlich Mose, der in Moab im Auftrag YHWHs handelt, und YHWH allein am Horeb. Sie lässt jedoch in keiner Weise darauf schließen, dass der Horebbund und seine Forderungen weniger bedeutend wären als der Moabbund mit seinen Verpflichtungen ¹³.

Nun zu den beiden Texteröffnungsperikopen selbst. In 5,1 wie in 29,1 wendet sich Mose mit seinem Aufruf an „ganz Israel“ ¹⁴. Doch handelt es sich bei der jeweils einberufenen offiziellen Volksversammlung nicht um zwei Veranstaltungen, die hintereinander stattgefunden hätten, sondern um ein und dieselbe Vollversammlung Israels am Todestag Moses. Sie wird nur unter verschiedenen Gesichtspunkten dargestellt. 29,1 ist als ein mit 5,1 wörtlich gleichlautender *wayyiqtol*-Satz formuliert. Als solcher lenkt er textsyntaktisch zum älteren Erzählpunkt zurück und nimmt ihn wieder auf ¹⁵. Und weil der Aufruf von 29,1 zur folgenden Rede führt, die nicht zur Bundesurkunde gehört, werden im Anschluss daran die Höraufforderung und Lernparänese von 5,1 nicht wiederholt. Der Bucherzähler bietet keine erzählerische Auskunft über den Ablauf des Tages, an dem Mose starb. Man darf also nicht einfach von der referierten Abfolge „Verlesung der Bundesurkunde“ und „bei der Bundeszeremonie erstmals

Jerusalem 1996) 274, der die Wendung „terms of the covenant“ auf die Gesetze, den Segen und Fluch der vorausgehenden Kapitel bezieht, die durch 5,2 und 28,69 gerahmt würden.

¹³ Nach M.Z. BRETTLER, „‘Fire, Cloud, and Deep Darkness’ (Deuteronomy 5:22): Deuteronomy’s Recasting of Revelation“, *The Significance of Sinai. Traditions about Sinai and Divine Revelation in Judaism and Christianity* (eds. G.J. BROOK – H. NAJMAN – L.T. STUCKENBRUCK) (Themes in Biblical Narrative 12; Leiden – Boston, MA 2008) 15–27, hier 26, spiegle Dtn 28,69 „Deuteronomy’s ambivalent attitude toward Horeb“. Während Kap. 5 am Ende die Offenbarung Gottes am Horeb als schlechte Idee darstelle, sei die Offenbarung durch einen Propheten wie Mose eine bessere; „what Moses is commanding ,today‘, namely at the end of the period of wandering, is much more important than what was commanded then, at Horeb“.

¹⁴ Diese Adressatenangabe dient im Deuteronomium als makrostrukturelles Signal (vgl. noch 1,1; 27,9; 31,1; 32,45; 34,12).

¹⁵ Zu diesem Phänomen vgl. W. GROSS, „*Wa=yiqtol* für Anknüpfung/Wiederaufnahme: Stilmittel und redaktionelles Verfahren“, in *Εν παση γραμματική και σοφία. Saggi di linguistica ebraica in onore di Alviero Niccacci ofm* (ed. G. GEIGER) (SBF.Analecta 78; Milano – Gerusalemme 2011) 153–172.

geäußerte Worte und mit ihnen verbundene Aktionen“ auf die Reihenfolge ihrer faktischen Durchführung schließen. Auch altorientalische Vertragsurkunden hielten sich in ihrem Aufbau, selbst wenn sie die wesentlichen Vorgänge der Zeremonie erwähnten oder auf sie anspielten, keineswegs stets genau an den Ablauf der Ereignisse beim Vertragsabschluss. Was am Todestag Moses der Verlesung der Horeburkunde vorausging oder folgte, überhaupt der ganze Handlungsverlauf der feierlichen Eideszeremonie in Moab, ist aus dem Deuteronomium nicht ersichtlich. Die performativen Texte des Bundesschlusses finden sich sowohl im zweiten (26,17-19; 27,1.9-10) als auch im dritten Buchteil (29,9-14; 30,15-20). Wie sie von Mose vorgetragen werden, können sie von ihrem Inhalt her nicht nacheinander rituell vollzogen werden. Doch braucht die Fabel des Deuteronomiums hier nicht weiter diskutiert zu werden¹⁶. Festzuhalten ist nur: Der Ablauf der erzählten Ereignisse ist mit der Abfolge der Texte nicht identisch.

In 5,1 setzt nach der Einberufung von ganz Israel eine auf die Horebtheophanie zurückblickende Erzählung ein („und sagte zu ihnen“). Sie mündet in 5,5 in die Redeeinleitung („indem er sagte“) des anschließenden Dekalog. In 29,1 folgt dem gleichen Aufruf mit der Redeeinleitung („und sagte zu ihnen“) der Hinweis auf „alles, was YHWH getan hat“. Der anschließende Geschichtsrückblick läuft in 29,8 in eine knappe, auf den Moabbund vorausblickende Paränese aus: „Bewahrt die Worte dieses Bundes und tut sie, damit euch alles, was ihr tun werdet, gelingt“. Beide Perikopen werden somit gerahmt: In 5,1 und 5 durch die Redeeinleitung mit *’mr*, in 29,1b und 8 durch das (mit verschiedenen Referenzen gebrauchte) Objekt *’et kâl ’šær ’šh*. Obwohl bei ihm die Aktivitäten Gottes in der Vergangenheit (v. 1b) und diejenigen Israels in der Zukunft (v. 8) liegen, beeinträchtigen diese Unterschiede nicht die formale Rahmungsfunktion¹⁷. 5,1-5 und 29,1-8 sind damit auf ähnliche Weise als selbständige Einheiten abgegrenzt. Die zwei Abschnitte unterscheiden sich durch Inhalt und Gattung, außerdem divergiert ihre Paränese zwischen der Mahnung zur Gesetzestreue und der zur Bundestreue. Dennoch sind sie aufeinander bezogen. Sie werden durch das wichtige Stichwort „Bund“ miteinander verklammert (5,2.3 und 29,8, vgl. 28,69), wobei als „dieser Bund“ (*habb^erît hazzo^t*) im Deuteronomium überhaupt nur der Horeb- (5,3) und der Moabbund (29,8.13) bezeichnet werden. Ferner spricht Mose im Deuteronomium, wenn er vergangene Ereignisse nacherzählt,

¹⁶ S. dazu G. BRAULIK – N. LOHFINK, *Sprache und literarische Gestalt*, 391-439.

¹⁷ Vgl. T.A. LENCHAK, „*Choose Life!*“ A Rhetorical-Critical Investigation of Deuteronomy 28,69–30,20 (AnBib 129; Roma 1993) 174.

von Kap. 1–3 abgesehen nur in 5,2-3 und 29,6-7.15 im „Wir“ der zusammen gemachten Erfahrungen ¹⁸. Außerdem gibt es zwischen 5,2-5 wie 29,1-8 und 29,9-14 noch eine Reihe sachlicher wie formulierungsmäßiger Gemeinsamkeiten ¹⁹. Am wichtigsten im Blick auf unser Thema ist schließlich: Beide Perikopen eröffnen den unmittelbar anschließenden Bundestext.

Trotz des geschichtlichen „Nacheinanders“ der Bundesschlüsse am Horeb und in Moab konvergieren 5,2-5 und 29,1-8 im „Heute“ des Bundes ²⁰. Von diesem „Heute“ (*hayyôm*) sprechen 5,3 und 29,3 (*‘ad hayyôm hazzâh* „bis zum heutigen Tag“) ²¹. Während Mose in 5,2-3 den Bundesschluss YHWHs am Horeb mit den hier und heute versammelten Israeliten einfach feststellt, begründet 29,1-7, weshalb YHWH diesen Horebbund mit dem in Moab zu schließenden identifizieren kann. Diese Vorgeschichte ist entscheidend. Deshalb geht es im Folgenden um die Funktion der beiden Anfänge 5,2-5 und 29,1-8 innerhalb der erzählten Welt des letzten Tages Moses und im Blick auf den Bundesschluss in Moab. Ob 5,2-5 und 29,1-8 jeweils eine ursprüngliche Einheit darstellen, ist literarkritisch zwar diskutiert. Uneinigkeit herrscht ebenso bei ihrer redaktionsgeschichtlichen Einordnung ins Deuteronomium. Ich möchte jedoch auf diese diachronen Fragestellungen nicht eingehen. Vielmehr untersuche ich die beiden Perikopen auf der Endtextebene und im Lesegefälle des Buches. Dieser lineare Leseprozess empfiehlt sich nicht zuletzt wegen der „dramatischen Präsentation“ des Deuteronomiums, die den Leser an den dargestellten Ereignissen teilnehmen lässt ²².

¹⁸ Vgl. MARKL, *Gottes Volk*, 49-50.

¹⁹ Zu weiteren literarischen und motivischen Verbindungen zwischen „Horebbund und Moabbund als Eckpfeilern des Dtn“ s. D. MARKL, *Der Dekalog als Verfassung des Gottesvolkes*. Die Brennpunkte einer Rechtshermeneutik des Pentateuch in Exodus 19–24 und Deuteronomium 5 (HBS 49; Freiburg im Breisgau 2007) 198-200.

²⁰ G. BRAULIK, „Heute‘ im Buch Deuteronomium. Tora und Bundesschluss“, *Tora und Fest*. Aufsätze zum Deuteronomium und zur Liturgie (SBAB 69; Stuttgart 2019) 61-81, hier 74-76. Ferner J.-P. SONNET, „Today‘ in Deuteronomy: A Narrative Metalepsis“, *Bib* 101 (2020) 498-518.

²¹ Gehäuft findet sich „heute“ (*hayyôm*) ferner in der durch 29,1-8 eingeleiteten Ritualbeschreibung 29,9-14, nämlich in den vv. 9, 11, 12, 14 (2-mal), ferner in v. 17.

²² „It is the exegete’s temptation to skip the linearity of the reading process (the reader’s progressive hermeneutics), and to determine from without, in panoramic view, what is patiently built from within“ (J.-P. SONNET, *The Book within the Book*. Writing in Deuteronomy [BIS 14; Leiden – New York – Köln 1997] 15). Narratologisch ist es günstig, zwischen „textinternen“ Bezügen zu Stellen auf der Kommunikationsebene der Mosereden, und „textexternen“ Bezügen auf der Kommunikationsebene des Buches, auf der die Intertextualität mit anderen biblischen Schriften in den Blick genommen wird, zu unterscheiden. Dementsprechend verschieden ist auch das Gewicht intra- bzw. intertextueller Bezüge für den Informationsaufbau im Leseprozess.

II. DAS „PROTOKOLL“ VOM BUNDESSCHLUSS AM HOREB (DTN 5,2-5)

„Insgesamt ist Dtn 5,1-5 als literarisches Kleinod gestaltet, das in geradezu akribisch-architektonischer Vernetzung innerhalb des Dtn zugleich Schlüssel motive aus der Sinaitheophanie in typisch dtn Transformation aufnimmt und eine höchst verdichtete Funktion erfüllt, die dem eingeleiteten Dekalog dient“²³. Unmittelbar nach der Überschrift des ersten Buchteils referierte Mose ein Gotteswort an das ganze Volk. Er leitete es in 1,6 ein: „YHWH, unser Gott, hat am Horeb zu uns gesagt“. Darauf spielt die Parallele in 5,2, dem Neueinsatz nach der Überschrift zum zweiten Buchteil, an: „YHWH, unser Gott, hat am Horeb einen Bund mit uns geschlossen“²⁴. Jetzt handelt es sich nicht mehr um den Aufbruch in die Wüste. Vielmehr wird „erzählt“, was ihm vorausging, und was Mose über die Offenbarung am Horeb bereits in 4,10-14 vorentworfen hatte. In 5,2-5 läuft die Szene auf das Dekalogzitat (vv. 6-21) zu. Weil es in Kap. 5 um „eine Zusammenstellung von rechtswirksamen offiziellen Äußerungen“ geht, kann man bei den vv. 2-5 von einem „Protokoll“ sprechen²⁵. Thema der in Wir-Rede gehaltenen vv. 2-3 ist der Bund, dessen Partner definiert werden. Im Anschluss daran bestimmen die vv. 4-5 die gegenseitigen Beziehungsverhältnisse zwischen YHWH, Volk und Mose beim Bundesschluss am Horeb. Dabei tritt das Ich Moses dem Ihr der Israeliten gegenüber²⁶.

Neben den bereits skizzierten Verbindungen zwischen 5,2-5 und 29,1-8 bestehen auch Gemeinsamkeiten mit dem Text des Moabbundesschlusses in 29,9-14. Wie 5,2-5 ist auch 29,9-14 „ein fast juristisch gemeinter, präzise formulierter Text, eine Art Protokoll“²⁷. Auch hier werden die menschlichen Bundespartner auf Seiten des Volks bestimmt, wird das Bundesverhältnis definiert und die Wendung *krt b'erît* für den Vollzug des

²³ MARKL, *Dekalog*, 208. Er belegt sein Urteil durch eine stilistisch-sprachlich und traditions geschichtlich detaillierte Analyse der Perikope ebd., 197-208. Sie nimmt vor allem Untersuchungen von N. LOHFINK, *Das Hauptgebot*. Eine Untersuchung literarischer Einleitungsfragen zu Dtn 5–11 (AnBib 20; Roma 1963) 145-150, auf.

²⁴ Außerdem ist wichtig, worauf ich später noch näher eingehe: Wenn Mose in 1,6 vor dem in Moab versammelten Volk die gemeinsame Vergangenheit zu rekapitulieren beginnt, schließt er sich mit ihm nicht nur im „Wir“ zusammen, sondern identifiziert er auch die jetzt angesprochenen Menschen mit der vorangegangenen Generation: „This rhetorical blending of the generations is characteristic of the Discourse, and the narrative important of 1:6-8 is paradigmatic as it establishes for the rest of Deuteronomy this intentional ambiguity, or better, the deliberate solidarity created among Israel's generations“ (ARNOLD, „Reexamining“, 18-19).

²⁵ LOHFINK, „Deuteronomium 5“, 143 und 118.

²⁶ Vgl. LOHFINK, *Hauptgebot*, 145-146.

²⁷ N. LOHFINK, „Der Bundesschluss im Land Moab. Redaktionsgeschichtliches zu Dt 28,69 – 32,47“, *Studien zum Deuteronomium und zur deuteronomistischen Literatur I* (SBAB 8; Stuttgart 1990) 53-82, hier 61.

Bundesschlusses gebraucht. Am Horeb (5,5) wie in Moab (29,13-14) ist Mose Mittler des Bundes, wenn auch auf verschiedene Weise. Doch wird der Horebbund ausschließlich von YHWH geschlossen. Nicht zuletzt betonen beide Texte das „Heute“ (*hayyôm*) des Deuteronomiumtags. An ihm wird die Szene des Bundesschlusses öffentlich und damit rechtsgültig in Gang gesetzt. Sobald 5,2-3 ausgesprochen ist, ist der einst geschlossene Horebbund schon in das „Heute“ der Moabsituation hineingenommen²⁸. Geht es um den Moabbund, muss also beim Horebbund begonnen werden, der in den Moabbund integriert werden wird.

Das „proleptische Summarium“²⁹ 5,2 fasst das Geschehen am Horeb zunächst knapp zusammen und leitet die rechtlichen Feststellungen der vv. 3-5 ein: „YHWH, unser Gott, hat am Horeb mit uns einen Bund geschlossen“. Diese Aussage wird von v. 3 problematisiert, wobei die Ortsangabe des Bundesschlusses „am Horeb“ und die darin eingeschlossene Zeitanangabe „unmittelbar nach dem Auszug aus Ägypten“ fehlt: „Nicht mit unseren Vätern hat YHWH diesen Bund geschlossen, sondern mit uns, uns diesen hier, heute, (uns) allen, den Lebenden“. Die „rhapsodische“ Übersetzung von v. 3b gibt die „stakkatohafte hebräische Syntax“ wieder, die jedes einzelne Wort gewissermaßen mit einem Ausrufezeichen versieht³⁰. Nirgendwo in der Hebräischen Bibel wird die zeitliche und räumliche Anwesenheit stärker betont. Zugleich wird dabei der übliche Umgang mit der Zeit in Frage gestellt. Die feierliche Formulierung des „mit uns“ (*‘immānû*) kontrastiert die Angeredeten mit ihren Vorfahren, also früheren Generationen, und lehnt „unsere Väter“ (*‘abotênû*)³¹ als Partner des

²⁸ Vgl. R. GOMES DE ARAÚJO, *Theologie der Wüste im Deuteronomium* (ÖBS 17; Frankfurt am Main 1999) 310.

²⁹ LOHFINK, „Deuteronomium 5“, 119.

³⁰ E. BALLHORN, „Hören, um zu leben. Vom Wort, das satt macht“, *BiLi* 89 (2016) 168-176, hier 172.

³¹ N. LOHFINK, *Die Väter Israels im Deuteronomium*. Mit einer Stellungnahme von Thomas Römer (OBO 111; Freiburg/Schweiz – Göttingen 1991), diskutiert drei Deutungen. Am plausibelsten erscheint ihm, dass mit den Vätern „alle Vorfahren aller denkbaren Generationen“ gemeint sind. „Denn das ganze folgende Kapitel arbeitet mit der narrativen Identität der Angeredeten mit dem Israel am Horeb“ (23). Bezieht man — zweite Möglichkeit — „Väter“ auf die Patriarchen, steht ihnen die angesprochene Exodus-Horeb-Moab-Generation gegenüber. Diese Konkretisierung ließe sich vielleicht in Analogie zum „Bund mit euch“ am Horeb in 4,23 und dem Bund „mit deinen Vätern“ in 4,31 vorstellen. Unwahrscheinlich sei — dritte Möglichkeit — die Deutung der Väter als der Exodus-Horeb-Generation in Unterscheidung von der angeredeten Moabgeneration. Sie wäre zwar von Dtn 1-3 bekannt, zwingt aber syntaktisch dazu, die Suffixkonjugation *kārat* als Koinzidenz zu verstehen: „Nicht mit unseren Vätern *schließt* YHWH *hiermit* diesen Bund, sondern mit uns ...“ (23-24). Doch bemüht sich Mose außerhalb von Kap. 1-3, selbst wenn er auf die Wüstenzeit zu sprechen kommt, „die Exodus- und die Moabgeneration als eine einzige zu zeichnen“. Nirgendwo bezeichnet er die Exodusgeneration als „die Väter“ der angeredeten Moabgeneration (24).

Horebbundes ab ³². Zwar könnte die Suffixkonjugation „hat geschlossen“ (*kārat*) eine performative, also im Jetzt der Moserede anzusetzende Handlung bezeichnen, und auch das „Wir“ und „heute“ ließen sich dafür anführen. Dennoch ist hier nicht gesagt, der Horebbund werde erst jetzt geschlossen ³³. Das geschah in der Vergangenheit, die Aussage „uns hier, heute, den Lebenden“ ³⁴ aber verweist auf die Gegenwart der Moserede und die in Moab versammelte Generation. Der Text bleibt somit „vergangenheitliche Erzählung, obwohl durch den sprachlichen und außersprachlichen Kontext zugleich Koinzidenz insinuiert ist“ ³⁵. Sowohl der Bundesschluss als auch das Phänomen „Zeit“ müssen im Folgenden noch genauer reflektiert werden.

Die vv. 4-5 explizieren *einen* Akt des Bundschließens, nämlich die Mitteilung Gottes: „Von Angesicht zu Angesicht hat YHWH auf dem Berg mitten aus dem Feuer mit euch geredet. Ich stand damals zwischen YHWH und euch, um euch das Wort YHWHs (*dēbar YHWH*) ³⁶ zu verkünden; denn ihr habt euch vor dem Feuer gefürchtet und seid nicht auf den Berg gestiegen“. Beide Verse präzisieren das „mit uns“ (v. 3) des Bundesschlusses: Gott sprach gewissermaßen auf Augenhöhe „mit euch“ (v. 4) — *ḏbr Piel ʾim* wird im Deuteronomium nur vom Sprechen Gottes mit dem Volk und im Zusammenhang der Dekalogmitteilung gebraucht (5,4; 9,10; vgl. rückblickend Ex 20,19.22). Die Mittlerstellung, die Mose dabei nach 5,5 einnimmt, unterscheidet sich von der Vermittlung, in die er 5,28-31 eingesetzt wird. Sie kann sich in 5,5 nicht auf die spätere Gesetzesverkündigung

³² Im Unterschied zu 29,13-14, wo Mose „nicht allein“ (*loʾ lʾbad*) mit den Anwesenden, sondern auch den Abwesenden den Moabbund schließt, fehlt in 5,3 *lʾbad*. Man darf also in v. 3a nicht „sinngemäß ergänzen: ‚nicht [nur] mit unseren Eltern‘“ — gegen MARKL, *Dekalog*, 204. Er stellt den „Vätern“ (= „Eltern“) — das wäre die Exodus-Horeb-Generation — die Moabgeneration gegenüber.

³³ Nach C. HARDMEIER, „Das *Schʿmaʾ Jisraʾel* in Dtn 6,4 im Rahmen der Beziehungstheologie der deuteronomistischen Tora“, *Erzähl diskurs und Redepragmatik im Alten Testament*. Unterwegs zu einer performativen Theologie der Bibel (FAT 47; Tübingen 2005), 123-154, hier 136, sei dabei klarzustellen, „daß Dtn 5,2f noch nicht den performativen Vollzug einer Bundesschließung zum Ausdruck bringe“. Dieser Akt „wird erst in 27,9 ‚an diesem heutigen Tag‘ vollzogen und in 29,9-14 rituell begangen“ (137). Aber wie wird etwas Vergangenes rund 40 Jahre später erstmalig vollzogen? Die beiden Stellen beziehen sich jedenfalls nicht auf den Horeb-, sondern den Moabbund. Dass Horeb- und Moabbund geschichtlich identisch sind, wird durch 28,69 ausgeschlossen.

³⁴ Die „Lebenden“ meinen die nicht zum Baal-Pegor (4,4) Abgefallenen, die deshalb nicht umgekommen und jetzt in Moab von Mose angesprochen sind.

³⁵ LOHFINK, *Väter*, 24.

³⁶ So zunächst mit M als *lectio difficilior* gegenüber einer Harmonisierung mit dem Kontext, den Zehn „Worten“. Dagegen lesen 4QDeut^a und Sam den Plural „Worte“ (*dibrē*), ebenso G, S und V. Nur wenn man zwischen *dēbar* und *YHWH* mit einer Haplographie des „y“ rechnete, wäre der Plural die ursprüngliche Lesart.

Moses beziehen ³⁷, und das gilt auch für den Hinweis „damals“ (*bā'ēt hahî*) ³⁸. Denn Moses Funktion als Gesetzesmittler ergibt sich nach den vv. 28-31 aus der Theophanieerfahrung Israels und ist sachlich-juristisch anderer Art ³⁹. Mose zitiert die Anweisung Gottes, sich zu ihm zu stellen, um „das ganze Gebot, die Gesetze und Rechtsentscheide“ zu hören (vv. 30-31), um die es seit v. 1 geht, und sie die Israeliten zu lehren. Danach springt er sofort in die paränetische Anrede an das 40 Jahre später ihm zuhörende Israel (v. 32-33). Dabei bleibt offen, ob Mose die Gesetze, die Gott ihm mitgeteilt hat, in Moab zum ersten Mal vorträgt ⁴⁰.

1. „einen Bund schließen mit“

Mit der Wendung „einen Bund schließen mit“ (*krt b'ērît 'im / 'æt*) benennt 5,2 das Programm des ersten Teils von Kap. 5. V. 3 wiederholt sie und präzisiert die menschlichen Partner des Horebbundes ⁴¹. Die

³⁷ Gegen F.-L. HOSSFELD, *Der Dekalog*. Seine späten Fassungen, die originale Komposition und seine Vorstufen (OBO 45; Freiburg/Schweiz – Göttingen 1982) 226, für den „der prophetische Terminus *d'bar YHWH* die gesamte mosaische Horebverkündigung“ bezeichnet. Sie „heißt sonst aber niemals *d'bar YHWH*“ (L. PERLITT, *Deuteronomium*. 1. Teilband Deuteronomium 1-6* [BKAT V/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn 2013] 421).

³⁸ Gegen MARKL, *Dekalog*, 206, der die Formel mit der Vermittlungsfunktion Moses vor und nach der Dekalogoffenbarung verbindet. J.-P. SONNET, „It was at that time that ... The Rhetorical Use of the Formula *bā'ēt hahî* in Deuteronomy“, *ZABR* 26 (2020) 265-281, hier 272-274, erklärt die Formel in 4,14 und 5,5 vor dem Hintergrund der Sinai-Perikope in Exodus. Zu Ex 20,18-21 füge Dtn 4,14 den Lehrauftrag Moses hinzu. Er ergehe auch in 5,31. Nach Ex 24,3 übermittle Mose „alle Worte YHWHs“ (*kāl dibrê YHWH*), das sei der Dekalog von Ex 20, und „alle Rechtssatzungen“ (*kāl hammišpāṭîm*), das sei das Bundesbuch Ex 21-23. „In my view, this is precisely what Moses' disclosure in Deut 5:5 is summarizing: there was no divine communication at Horeb that went without Moses' mediation, and this mediation started with the imparting of the Ten Words. [...] Now, the mediating role of Moses in the declaration of the divine word (to declare to you the word of Yhwh' [5:5]) warrants his mediating role in the teaching of the Horeb revelation“ (273).

³⁹ LOHFINK, *Hauptgebot*, 145-146. Das gilt auch für die Formulierungen: „In 5,27 verlangt man vielmehr von Moses, er solle sich nähern (*qrb*), solle hören (*šm'*) und solle dann reden (*dbr* — das Wort wird vorher von Jahwe gebraucht); Jahwe sagt in 5,31, Moses solle ‚bei ihm stehen‘, er werde mit ihm reden, und Moses solle dann das Volk lehren (*lmd Piel*)“ (145). „With the exception of the ‚ten words,‘ Moses does not formulate the legacy he received at Horeb by quoting God (no stipulation is prefaced with ‚YHWH said: ...‘); Moses, rather, liberally conveys and enforces what God has revealed to him. This conveying has the specific modality of a ‚teaching,‘ as enjoined upon Moses by God himself“ (SONNET, *Book*, 47).

⁴⁰ N. LOHFINK, „Prolegomena zu einer Rechtshermeneutik des Pentateuch“, *Studien V*, 181-231, hier 196-197. Vermutlich ist an ihren Vortrag in der Vertragsschließungszeremonie selbst zu denken, weil die eigentlichen Kerntexte des Bundesschlusses in ihr zu finden sind.

⁴¹ *krt b'ērît* ist im Deuteronomium mit *'im* (4,23; 9,9; 29,11.24) und mit *'æt* (5,3; 28,69 [2-mal]; 29,13; 31,16) belegt. Zwischen den beiden Präpositionen besteht kein wesentlicher

Semantik von *b^erît* und *krt b^erît* ist diskutiert. Die Grundbedeutung geht auf einen Eid oder Vertragsschluss, also einen stiftenden Akt zurück. Entscheidend ist die Handlung, durch die ein „Bund“ zustande kommt. In metonymischem Verständnis kann *b^erît* den Gesamtvorgang einer Vertragsschließung, aber auch noch umfassender das aus einem Vertragsschluss resultierende Rechtsverhältnis oder die implizierte Verpflichtung auf ein Rechtsdokument bezeichnen⁴². Rituelle Vorgänge, die im Hintergrund des Bund-„schneidens“ gestanden sein mögen und zur Metapher wurden, spielen hier keine Rolle. Entscheidend ist der sprachliche Prozess, der mit *krt b^erît* ausgedrückt wird. Den hermeneutischen Schlüssel zu 5,2-3 liefern die Darstellung der Horebtheophanie und ihre paränetische Auswertung in Kap. 4.⁴³

Nachdem 4,11 die von der Theophanie ausgelösten Naturerscheinungen breit geschildert hat, erklären die vv. 12-13 die Offenbarung präzise juristisch: „YHWH sprach (*wayy^edabbēr*) zu euch mitten aus dem Feuer. Eine Stimme, Worte (*d^ebārîm*) habt ihr gehört, doch eine Gestalt habt ihr nicht gesehen, nur eine Donnerstimme (gehört). Er verkündete (*wayyaggēd*) euch seinen Bund (*b^erîtô*) [das heißt]⁴⁴: Er verpflichtete (*šiwwāh* Piel) euch darauf, die Zehn Worte (*‘ašæræt hadd^ebārîm*) zu verwirklichen (*la‘ašôt*), und er schrieb sie (*wayyiqṭ^ebēm*) auf zwei steinerne Tafeln“. Die vier finiten Verben der vv. 12-13 bezeichnen Handlungen YHWHs⁴⁵: die Mitteilung artikulierter Worte, die verstanden werden konnten; die feierlich-öffentliche Proklamation des Gottesbundes; worin diese Verkündigung besteht und worauf der Nachdruck liegt: die Verpflichtung Israels auf das Halten der Zehn Worte; schließlich ihre Niederschrift auf den Steintafeln, die den juristischen Charakter der Gesamtvorstellung unterstreicht. Eine Übergabe oder Deponierung der Bundesurkunde wird nicht erwähnt. Zu diesen Elementen nun im Einzelnen.

Bedeutungsunterschied. Das zeigt sich auch daran, dass sie in 5,2.3 und 29,11.13 in Parallele verwendet werden. Dieser parallele Gebrauch verbindet dann auch Horeb- und Moabbund.

⁴² N. LOHFINK, „Ein Bund oder zwei Bünde in der Heiligen Schrift“, *L'interpretazione della Bibbia nella Chiesa*. Atti del Simposio promosso dalla Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede, Roma, settembre 1999 (Città del Vaticano 2001) 272-297.

⁴³ Vgl. G. BRAULIK, „Hat Gott die Religionen der Völker gestiftet? Dtn 4,19 im Kontext von Kultbilderverbot und Monotheismus“, *Tora und Fest*, 142-251, hier 154-161.

⁴⁴ Die Partikel *‘ašær* ist hier appositionell-explikativ eingesetzt. Man gibt sie am besten durch „das heißt“ oder einfach durch einen Doppelpunkt wieder. „Der von der Partikel eingeleitete Text entfaltet und erläutert, worin der von Gott verkündete ‚Bund‘ besteht: zunächst einmal darin, dass Gott Israel gebietet, die Zehn Worte zu halten“ (G. BRAULIK, „Deuteronomium 4,13 und der Horebbund“, *Studien zu Buch und Sprache des Deuteronomiums* [SBAB 63; Stuttgart 2017] 51-59, hier 55).

⁴⁵ Vgl. BRAULIK, „Deuteronomium 4,13“, 57.

Dass Gott „mitten aus dem Feuer“ redete (v. 12), bedeutet nicht, dass er nicht unmittelbar zum Volk gesprochen hätte, sondern besagt, dass er „mitten im Feuer“ präsent ist. Keine andere Theophaniebeschreibung betont aber bei der Präsenz YHWHs so deutlich die Transzendenz seiner Gestalt. Gott manifestiert sich nur akustisch, und zwar „mit Donnerstimme“, sodass er von Vielen und auch auf Entfernung gehört werden kann. Das ist auch die Voraussetzung dafür, dass Israel den Dekalog beobachten kann, wie Gott es in „seinem Bund“ verlangt. Denn in v. 13 geht es nicht um den Inhalt des Bundes, sondern um den Akt des Bundesschlusses. „Gott hat nicht einfach den Dekalog ausgesprochen, sondern hat kundgetan, worauf der von ihm auferlegte Schwur verpflichten sollte: auf die Beobachtung des Dekalogs“⁴⁶. „Bund“ ist also hier nicht die technische Bezeichnung für die Zehn Worte als Dokument — die *ʿašarət hadd^ebārīm* bilden keine Apposition zu *b^erît*, sondern sind Objekt von *laʿašôt*. Der Bundesschluss beinhaltet vielmehr beides: die Mitteilung wie Dokumentation des Bundestextes und die Verpflichtung zu einem bundestextgemäßen Handeln⁴⁷.

Im Folgenden greift 4,15 die Gotteserfahrungen, die v. 12 beschrieben hat, als theologischen Traditionsbeweis für die Bilderverbotsparänese auf, schweigt aber über die akustischen Phänomene: „Nehmt euch um eures Lebens willen gut in Acht! Denn ihr habt keinerlei Gestalt gesehen an dem Tag, als YHWH am Horeb mitten aus dem Feuer zu euch sprach“. Im Anschluss an v. 15 leitet schließlich die paränetische Zuwendung in v. 23 das Kultbilderverbot aus der Horeboffenbarung ab: „Nehmt euch in Acht, dass ihr nicht den Bund (*b^erît*) vergesst, den YHWH, euer Gott, mit euch geschlossen hat (*kārat ʿimmākem*), und euch kein Kultbild macht, das irgendetwas darstellt, das YHWH, dein Gott, dir verboten hat“. Hier fasst die gebräuchliche Kurzformel „den Bund schließen“ (*krt b^erît*) den ganzen in den vv. 12-13 narrativ entfalteten Handlungskomplex zusammen — vom auslösenden Akt bis zu seinem Ergebnis, dem verschrifteten Dekalog, den v. 23 auf das Kultbilderverbot fokussiert.

Mit diesem nach seinen einzelnen Aktionen differenzierten Verständnis vom „Bund“ Gottes liefert Kap. 4 eine Leseanleitung für 5,2-5, wo die Erfahrungen der Horebtheophanie reflektiert werden. Die vv. 5,2 und 3 bezeichnen wie 4,23 mit *krt b^erît* den Gesamtvorgang des Bundesschlusses. Er steht programmatisch am Anfang der Horeberzählung. Die vv. 5,4 und 5 nehmen aus dem Kurzresümee 4,12-13 die Verben *dbr* Piel und *ngd* Hifil auf, verändern aber ihre Einbindung in den Kontext und ihre

⁴⁶ LOHFINK, „Prolegomena“, 193 Anm. 45.

⁴⁷ BRAULIK, „Deuteronomium 4,13“, 56.

Syntax. Während Gott nämlich nach 4,12 distanziert autoritativ „zu euch [Israel] sprach (*wayyēdabbēr*)“, „sprach er“ (*dibbār*) 5,4 zufolge „mit euch [Israel] von Angesicht zu Angesicht“. Und während er nach 4,13 „seinen Bund verkündete“ (*wayyaggēd b^erîtô*), stand Mose nach 5,5 zwischen Gott und Volk, um ihm „das Wort YHWHs zu verkünden“ (*l^ehaggîd ʾet d^ebar YHWH*), weil es aus Furcht vor dem Feuer den Berg nicht bestiegen hatte (vgl. 4,11). Die Verkündigung des „Wortes YHWHs“ steht somit an der Stelle, wo 4,13 von der Proklamation des Bundes spricht, das heißt: von der Verpflichtung auf die Zehn Worte, nicht aber von der Verkündigung des Dekalogs selbst. Man sollte deshalb *dābār* an dieser Stelle durch „Anspruch“ wiedergeben. Vermutlich wurde *d^ebar YHWH* in 5,5 gewählt, weil der Ausdruck *b^erît* schon durch die Wendung *krt b^erît* und seine Semantik in den Versen 5,2 und 3 besetzt ist. Dass in 5,5 Mose und nicht wie in 4,13 Gott selbst diesen Verpflichtungsakt, „den Anspruch YHWHs“, Israel verkündet, wird gewöhnlich als Indiz für die spätere Einfügung des Verses aufgefasst⁴⁸. Liest man den Text allerdings synchron, hängt diese Aktion Moses wahrscheinlich damit zusammen, dass er anschließend den Dekalog zitiert. Außerdem bildet die Gottunmittelbarkeit, die nach 5,4 dem Volk gewährt ist, sonst ein Privileg Moses (*pānîm ʾel pānîm*: Ex 33,11; Dtn 34,10; *dbr* Piel *ʾim*: Ex 20,9). Es kommt hier in seiner Stellung zwischen YHWH und Israel zur Geltung.

2. „mit uns hier heute“

Dtn 5,3 stellt die Vorfahren den jetzt vor Mose versammelten Israeliten gegenüber: Nur mit dem gegenwärtigen Israel und Mose hat YHWH den Bund am Horeb geschlossen. Damit wird die in Kap. 1–3 getroffene Unterscheidung zwischen der Generation des Auszugs und der Horebtheophanie, die in der Wüste ausgestorben ist, und der Generation der Zuhörer Moses in Moab⁴⁹ ausdrücklich in Abrede gestellt. Als Bundespartner gilt

⁴⁸ Vgl. allerdings PERLITT, *Deuteronomium*, 420: „Daß V. 5 ein Zusatz von anderer Hand sei, erscheint naheliegend, ist aber doch nicht sicher, denn im Zusammenhang von Dtn 5 ist V. 5 auch ein Vorgriff auf die Gedanken zum Verhältnis Jahwe – Mose – Volk im Anschluß an das Dekalogzitat. [...] Wer V. 5 für einen Nachtrag hält, traut dem Interpolator zu, was er ein und demselben Verf. nicht zutraut: das Aushalten einer gewissen Spannung zwischen V. 4 und 5“.

⁴⁹ Nach J. STACKERT, „The Wilderness Period without Generation Change: The Deuteronomic Portrait of Israel’s Forty-Year Journey“, *VT* 70 (2020) 696–721, kannte das ursprüngliche Deuteronomium kein strafweises Aussterben der Exodusgeneration. Vielmehr seien 1,35.39 und 2,14–16, die von einem Generationenwechsel berichten, erst später eingefügt worden, um den Wüstenzug mit anderen Pentateuchdarstellungen zu harmonisieren. Diese literarkritische These muss in unserer synchronen Endtextuntersuchung nicht diskutiert werden.

vielmehr trotz des Generationenwechsels die im Deuteronomium außerhalb der Kap. 1–3 angesprochene „Exodus-Horeb-Moab-Generation“⁵⁰. Das ist „unter ‚geschichtlicher‘ Rücksicht offenkundig eine falsche Aussage“⁵¹. Diese „Gleichzeitigkeit der Generationen“⁵² wird bereits in Kap. 4 eingeführt⁵³. Nach den vv. 9-10 soll das von Mose angesprochene Israel die Ereignisse, die es mit eigenen Augen gesehen, und die Worte, die es gehört hat, nicht vergessen, nämlich den Tag, als es am Horeb vor YHWH stand⁵⁴. Wie soll man sich also diese ausdrückliche Gleichsetzung der Volksversammlung in Moab mit den am Horeb von YHWH „in Anspruch Genommenen“ erklären? Geht es um ein „kulturelles Gedächtnis“, insbesondere die rhetorische Technik einer „Generationskompression“⁵⁵? Oder handelt es sich „um kultische Identifizierung der Generationen“⁵⁶? Welche Funktion soll diese Vorstellung dann erfüllen? Wird durch eine so stark wie sonst nie im Deuteronomium betonte „Aktualisierung“ die gesamte folgende Nacherzählung der Horeboffenbarung für die Moab-Generation als Partner des Horebbundes rechtsrelevant⁵⁷? Geht es „um rechtshermeneutische Differenzierungen“, was nur mittels „einer

⁵⁰ Vgl. LOHFINK, *Väter*, 23-24. Zum Sinn der Generationenverschmelzung, 20

⁵¹ MARKL, *Dekalog*, 204.

⁵² PERLITT, *Deuteronomium*, 318. Sie sei eigentlich ein literarkritisches Problem der Zusammengehörigkeit von Kap. 2–3 mit 4, kein theologisches.

⁵³ Zur „Identifizierung von Moab mit Horeb“ in 4,1-40, vgl. J.G. MILLAR, „Living at the Place of Decision: Time and Place in the Framework of Deuteronomy“, in J.G. McCONVILLE – J.G. MILLAR, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy* (JSOT.SS 179; Sheffield 1994) 15-88, hier 32-49. Zur „rhetoric of generational compression“ in diesem Kapitel jüngstens St.D. CAMPBELL, *Remembering the Unexperienced*. Cultural Memory, Canon Consciousness, and the Book of Deuteronomy (BBB 191; Göttingen 2021) 155-197.

⁵⁴ „The nation and all of its generations are conceived here as one personality. Moses is here addressing the people as if all of them would have been present at Mount Sinai, though most of them were born after the event there“ (M. WEINFELD, *Deuteronomy 1–11*. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary [AB 5; New York 1991] 203). Gleiches gelte für 5,3; 11,2,7; 29,13-14 und 15 — „Israel throughout its generations is thus presented in Deuteronomy as one body, a corporate personality“ (238).

⁵⁵ „[...] although the generation that stands on the plains of Moab has no direct, personal memory of the Horeb theophany, that event nonetheless becomes a central event in the life of each generation of Israel precisely because Israel is able to understand that event through mediated, transmitted cultural memory“ (CAMPELL, *Remembering*, 149). Dabei habe die „rhetoric of generational compression“ die wichtige theologische Funktion, den Bund als bleibende Wirklichkeit für spätere Mitglieder der Gemeinschaft zu ermöglichen — als „trans-generational covenant“ (197).

⁵⁶ LOHFINK, „Deuteronomium 5“, 116 Anm. 16. Vgl. dazu die eingehende Diskussion durch J.M. SCHMIDT, „Vergegenwärtigung und Überlieferung. Bemerkungen zu ihrem Verhältnis im dtn.-dtr. Überlieferungsbereich“, *EvT* 30 (1970) 169-200. S. auch den Hinweis von CAMPBELL, *Remembering*, 230-236, auf das „Wiedererleben“ des Sinaibundes in der Feier des jüdischen Wochenfestes.

⁵⁷ MARKL, *Dekalog* 205.

diachronen Rückfrage in das literaturgeschichtlich zu beschreibende Werden des ‚Endtextes‘ erkennbar“ wird ⁵⁸? Vielleicht lassen sich diese Fragen am ehesten durch einen Vergleich der Gründungserzählung in 5,2-5 mit anderen Texten des Deuteronomiums beantworten, in denen sich Adressaten des Buches lange nach dem Moab-Heute mit der Exodusgeneration identifizieren. Um das Phänomen solch persönlicher Aneignung der kanonischen Geschichte Israels zu klären, ziehe ich im Folgenden die zwei credoartigen Texte 6,21-25 und 26,5-9 heran. Inhaltlich sprechen sie über ein zeitlos gültig bleibendes Ursprungsgeschehen.

Exkurs

Beide „Kurzformeln des Glaubens“ stehen als Redezitate auf der — nach dem Erzähler und den von ihm zitierten Mosereden — dritten Kommunikationsebene des Buches. Sie sind nach Zeit und Ort vom Deuteronomiumstag unterschieden. Gegenüber dem Moab-Heute (5,1.3) liegt ihr „Heute“ (6,24 *kʿharryôm hazzæh*; 26,3 *harryôm*) erst in der Zukunft. Die zitierten „Identifikations- und Bekenntnistexte“ ⁵⁹ sollen „morgen, künftig“ (*māhār* 6,20) im Land bzw. „in jenen Tagen“ (*bayyāmim hāhēm* 26,3) im Zentralheiligtum gesprochen werden. In beiden Summarien läuft die Geschichte jeweils auf den ausdrücklich genannten „Sitz im Leben“ zu, an dem sich Israel seiner Gründungsereignisse bewusst werden soll, aus denen es lebt — der „Gesetze, damit es uns alle Tage gut geht“, bzw. der Führung ins Land mit seinen Früchten ⁶⁰.

Die „Familienkatechese“ 6,21-25 muss erfolgen, wenn die Kinder spontan nach dem Verpflichtungscharakter der „Eidesbestimmungen, Gesetze und Rechtsentscheide“ fragen, nach der Bedeutung dessen, was in Israel als Gesellschaftsordnung gilt (v. 20). Für eine solche Situation hat das Deuteronomium ein „katechetisches Credo“ vorformuliert. Es lässt die Eltern trotz des Abstands vieler Generationen nicht bloß aus dem Glaubenswissen Israels heraus, sondern als Bürgen mit dem Wir selbst erfahrener Rettungs- und Offenbarungsgeschichte und damit als Repräsentanten des YHWH-Volkes bekennen ⁶¹: „Wir waren Sklaven des Pharao in Ägypten, aber YHWH hat uns mit starker Hand aus Ägypten geführt. YHWH hat vor unseren Augen gewaltige, unheilvolle Zeichen und Wunder an Ägypten, am Pharao und an seinem ganzen Haus getan, uns aber hat er dort herausgeführt, um uns in das Land, das er unseren Vätern mit einem Schwur versprochen hatte, hineinzuführen und es uns zu geben“ (vv. 21-23). Hier identifizieren sich also künftige Israeliten mit der Generation des Auszugs. Dann wird neu angesetzt: „Und YHWH hat uns verpflichtet, alle diese Gesetze zu halten und YHWH, unseren Gott, zu fürchten“ (v. 24a). Das setzt voraus, dass Gott diese Gesetze

⁵⁸ E. OTTO, *Deuteronomium 1-11*. Zweiter Teilband: 4,44–11,32 (HThKAT; Freiburg im Breisgau 2012) 681.

⁵⁹ MARKL, *Gottes Volk*, 51.

⁶⁰ Vgl. J. TASCHNER, *Die Mosereden im Deuteronomium*. Eine kanonorientierte Untersuchung (FAT 59; Tübingen 2008) 96-97.

⁶¹ Zu diesem „transhistorischen Gebrauch“ des „Wir“ vgl. K. FINSTERBUSCH, „Die kollektive Identität und die Kinder. Bemerkungen zu einem Programm im Buch Deuteronomium“, *Gottes Kinder* (JBTh 17; Neukirchen-Vluyn 2002) 99-120, hier 108-111.

unterwegs, am Horeb, erlassen und dass Israel — so darf man ebenfalls voraussetzen — sie akzeptiert hat. Aus der Befreiungstat Gottes erschließt sich der Sinn des Gesetzesgehorsams: anthropologisch als „Heil“ und „Leben“ im Verheißungsland, juristisch-theologisch als „YHWH-Furcht“ und „Gerechtigkeit“, als „Im-Recht-Sein“ vor Gott (vv. 24-25) ⁶². Diese Kinderbelehrung verlangt angesichts eines — zeitgeschichtlich wahrscheinlich „tiefen Traditionsabrisses und eines folgenreichen Generationsabbruchs“ — ein persönlich verantwortetes Zeugnis und den „Verzicht auf eine auch nur innere Distanzierung“ ⁶³. Sie erzählt deshalb die Ursprungsgeschichte Israels als Bekenntnis von Beteiligten — „wir waren“, „vor unseren Augen“ und „uns“ —, das die Generationen zusammenbindet. Trotzdem ist die vom Zugehörigkeitswissen geprägte Antwort formelhaft. Wird also die „Gleichzeitigkeit der Zeugen mit der Exodus- und Sinaigeneration“ bloß als „verblüffendes Stilmittel“ gebraucht und ist sie „aus einer quasi liturgischen Gleichzeitigkeit erwachsen“ ⁶⁴? Im Unterschied zum „Vater-Sohn-Gespräch“ im Tetrateuch, das ausschließlich im kultischen Zusammenhang auftaucht (Ex 12,27; 13,8.14-15), hat dieses in Dtn 6,20-25 eine didaktische Funktion ⁶⁵ (vgl. Jos 4,21-24).

Das deuteronomische Gesetz sieht in 26,1-11 vor, dass der Familienvater bei der jährlichen Wallfahrt nach Jerusalem, wahrscheinlich am Laubhüttenfest, in einem Korb die ersten Ernteerträge des Ackers ins Heiligtum vor den Priester bringt und zu ihm sagt: „Ich bezeuge heute (*higgadti hayyôm*) YHWH, deinem Gott, dass ich in das Land gekommen bin, das uns zu geben YHWH unseren Vätern geschworen hat“ (v. 4). Nachdem der Priester den Korb vor den Altar gestellt hat, spricht der Familienvater ein Bekenntnis, das den Ernteseegen öffentlich deutet. Mit ihm stellt er sich in die Geschichte Israels mit seinem Gott. Sein Kurzaufsatz der Geschichte greift bis in die Zeit des Urahns — gemeint ist der Patriarch Jakob — zurück. Sobald er in Ägypten zu einem „großen, mächtigen und zahlreichen Volk“ geworden ist, das von den Ägyptern bedrückt wurde, wechselt das „Ich“ des einzelnen Familienvaters ins generationsübergreifende „Wir“ Israels ⁶⁶: „Die Ägypter behandelten uns schlecht, machten uns rechtlos und legten uns harte Fronarbeit auf. Wir schrien zu YHWH, dem Gott unserer Väter, und YHWH hörte unser Schreien und sah unsere Rechtlosigkeit, unsere Arbeitslast und unsere Bedrängnis. Und YHWH führte uns aus Ägypten [...] und brachte uns an diese Stätte und gab uns dieses Land, ein Land, wo Milch und Honig fließen“ (vv. 6-9). An dieses Bekenntnis, das von YHWH in dritter Person redet, schließt noch ein Darbringungsgebet für die Erstlingsfrüchte an, in dem der opfernde Israelit Gott wieder direkt anredet (v. 10). Das Geschichtshandeln YHWHs umfasst also Jahrhunderte: die Volksgeschichte Israels von Ägypten bis zur salomonischen Ära, als

⁶² Vgl. G. BRAULIK, „Gesetz als Evangelium. Rechtfertigung und Begnadigung nach der deuteronomischen Tora“, *Studien zur Theologie des Deuteronomiums* (SBAB 2; Stuttgart 1988) 123-160, hier 134-138.

⁶³ L. PERLITT, „Deuteronomium 6,20-25: eine Ermutigung zu Bekenntnis und Lehre“, *Deuteronomium-Studien* (FAT 8; Tübingen 1994) 144-156, hier 147 und 149.

⁶⁴ So PERLITT, „Deuteronomium 6,20-25“, 150.

⁶⁵ Vgl. M. WEINFELD, *Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford ²1990) 34-35.

⁶⁶ Zum Numeruswechsel vgl. N. LOHFINK, „Zum ‚kleinen geschichtlichen Credo‘ Dtn 26,5-9“, *Studien I*, 263-290, hier 267-269.

der Jerusalemer Tempel ⁶⁷ — „diese Stätte“ (*hammāqôm*, vgl. 12,5 u. ö.) — gebaut wurde, ja bis in die jeweilige Gegenwart. Zugleich bewirkt Gott die Fruchtbarkeit des Landes, die immer wieder einen Erntedank ermöglicht. Was auch dieses Bekenntnis wie das katechetische Credo grundsätzlich von der Aufzählung der Großtaten Gottes in verschiedenen Geschichtssummarien unterscheidet, ist die persönliche Betroffenheit im „Uns“ und „Wir“, in 26,6-9 sowohl vor als auch nach dem göttlichen Eingreifen. Dass sich der Sprecher mit der Exodusgeneration identifiziert, ist zwar in den jährlich wiederkehrenden Darbringungsritus der Erstlingsfrüchte eingebettet. Dennoch hängt die Vergegenwärtigung der einmaligen Geschichte nicht grundsätzlich am liturgischen Rahmen. Das beweist das gesamtisraelitische Bekenntnis in der Botschaft Moses an den König von Edom in Num 20,15-16, der vermutlichen Vorlage von Dtn 26,5-9 ⁶⁸. Der Adressat des Bekenntnisses im „Modelltext“ Numeri 20 ist weder der einzelne Israelit wie in der „Katecheteninstruktion“ (Dtn 6,21-25) noch Gott wie im Rahmen des „geschichtlichen Credo“ (26,4.10), sondern ein fremdländischer König bzw. Edom. Dass ein bekenntnisartiges Geschichtsresümee auch mit einem Bundesschluss verbunden werden kann, beweist Josua 24 ⁶⁹.

Wie lässt sich also angesichts der skizzierten Vergleichstexte die Gleichsetzung der Partner des Moabbundes mit jenen des Horebbundes in 5,3 begreifen? Zunächst: Religiöses Bekennen ermöglicht eine Identifizierung mit der Vergangenheit der Glaubensgemeinschaft, die sie in späteren Zeiten zu ihrer eigenen Geschichte macht. Die Beispiele lassen ferner erkennen, dass dieser Sprechakt ⁷⁰ auf unterschiedlichen Kommunikationsebenen stattfindet, und zwar innerhalb wie außerhalb des Kultes. Dabei kann Bekennen erstens verschiedene Sprachfunktionen erfüllen; es kann sich zweitens an mehrere Adressaten wenden; und es kann drittens Handlungs- wie Lehrcharakter haben.

⁶⁷ In den beiden Geschichtsabrissen Dtn 6,21-23 und 26,5-9 fehlen die Führung durch die Wüste und die Sinaioffenbarung, weil dem Geschehensbogen die Rechtskategorie „Versklavung – Sklavenbefreiung“ (mit den juristischen Termini „herausführen“ – „hineinführen“) bzw. das Erfahrungsmodells eines Helfers in Bedrängnis (Not – Klage – Erhörung – Eingreifen), in das der Rechtsvorgang „Befreiung eines Sklaven“ eingebaut ist, zugrunde liegt.

⁶⁸ Vgl. dazu LOHFINK, „Credo“, 271-274.

⁶⁹ Die Abschiedsrede Josuas vor den in Sichem versammelten Stämmen zitiert in 24,2-13 eine YHWH-Rede, in der Gott fast durchgehend in erster Person über sein Handeln zugunsten Israels spricht. Diese Erwählungsgeschichte identifiziert die jetzt zusammengeführte Landnahme-generation mit denen, die YHWH aus Ägypten herausführte (v. 5b), die sich lange in der Wüste aufhielt (v. 7b), die er ins Ostjordanland der Amoriter brachte (v. 8) und der er schließlich das Westjordanland gab (v. 13). Doch werden Herausführung und Rettung am Meer auch von der Generation der „Väter“ erzählt (vv. 6-7 und 17). Der mehrmalige Wechsel zwischen den Objekten des Gotteshandelns unterstreicht stilistische ihre Identifizierung. Zu Jos 24 vgl. Ph. GRAF, „Nicht ihr habt mich erwählt, sondern ich habe euch erwählt.“ Die Erwählung Israels und deren Missverständnis in Josua 24“, *Übergänge*. Das Buch Josua in seinen Kontexten (ed. E. BALLHORN) (SBB 76; Stuttgart 2020) 355-372. Ferner CAMPBELL, *Remembering*, 211-218, z.B. 214: „[...] Josh 24:5-7, the clear compression of generations points up the fact that the blurring of such boundaries lies within the intention of the authors and editors“.

⁷⁰ Vgl. zum Folgenden A. WAGNER, „Bekennen. Zur Analyse eines religiösen Sprechakts“, *Beten und Bekennen*. Über Psalmen (Neukirchen-Vluyn 2008) 89-95.

Diese drei Klassifizierungen können noch weiter differenziert werden. Das Bekenntnis erfüllt eine „kognitive“ Funktion, wenn es sich auf Kerngehalte des Glaubens besinnt. Sie ist praktisch immer mitgegeben, wo ein Bekenntnis ausgesprochen wird. Eine spezifisch „repräsentative“ Funktion hat Bekenntnis, wenn damit ein Glaubensinhalt ausdrücklich festgestellt wird. Das gilt besonders, wenn er anderen Menschen vermittelt wird. Wird das Bekenntnis aber wie in 26,5-10 Gott gegenüber abgelegt, ist es ein „deklarativer Akt“, der ein Glaubensverhältnis ausdrückt und stärkt. Außerdem hat das Bekenntnis Sprachhandlungscharakter, weil es gegenüber einer Öffentlichkeit ausgesprochen wird und rechtlich relevant ist. In 6,21-25 handelt es sich dagegen um ein tradierfähiges Lehr-Bekenntnis gegenüber der jungen Generation. Zugleich ist es ein „kommissiver“, das heißt ein „selbst-verpflichtender“, Sprechakt, der auch für die Folgen, nämlich die Beobachtung des „ganzen Gebots“, Verantwortung übernimmt. Diese kurze Beschreibung der Funktionen zeigt: Bekenntnis ist ein mehrdeutiger und multifunktionaler Sprechakt. Was jeweils dominiert, entscheiden Sprecherintention und Kommunikationsebene.

Zurück zu 5,2-3 und den oben gestellten Fragen. In diesen Versen dürfte das Bekenntnis Moses gegenüber der Vollversammlung Israels vor allem als repräsentativer Sprechakt zu verstehen sein — als Feststellung und Erklärung einer gemeinsamen Ursprungs- und Glaubensgeschichte, die für die Moab-Gegenwart Konsequenzen hat. Zugleich hat das Bekenntnis den Charakter einer rechtsverbindlichen Sprachhandlung. Das schließt wie in den beiden Credo-Texten hermeneutische Feststellungen keineswegs aus. Im Übrigen ist das Bekenntnis weder an den Kult gebunden noch ist es eine Aktualisierung ⁷¹. Um seine Funktion im Moab-Heute zu verstehen, benötigt man auch keine diachrone Rekonstruktion des Geschehens.

III. DIE DEUTUNG DER VOLKSGESCHICHTE BIS ZUM BUNDESSCHLUSS IN MOAB (29,1-7)

Die dritte Buchteilüberschrift 28,69 greift mit dem Wort „Bund“ (*bʿrît*) das Stichwort auf, das sofort den nächsten Textabschnitt 29,1-14 in den vv. 8, 11 13 prägen wird. Sie differenziert aber zwischen dem Moab- und dem Horebbund. 29,1b-7 fasst „die Geschichte der Beziehungen zwischen den beiden Bundespartnern“ ⁷² zusammen und beschließt sie in v. 8 mit einer Paränese:

⁷¹ Z.B. gegen MILLAR, *Time and Place*, 58: „The current generation is not to think of the covenant at Horeb as a mere memory, but as a memory which is actualized in the present at Moab“.

⁷² GOMES DE ARAÚJO, *Theologie der Wüste*, 281.

29,1b Ihr habt selber alles gesehen (*'attam r-e'âtam*), was YHWH in Ägypten vor euren Augen dem Pharao, allen seinen Dienern und seinem ganzen Land angetan hat: ² Die schweren Prüfungen, die deine Augen gesehen haben, die großen Zeichen und Wunder. ³ Aber ein Herz, das (wirklich) erkennt, Augen, die (wirklich) sehen, und Ohren die (wirklich) hören, hat YHWH euch bis zum heutigen Tag nicht gegeben.

⁴ Ich habe euch vierzig Jahre lang durch die Wüste geführt ⁷³. Eure Kleider sind nicht zerschissen und deine Sandalen nicht an deinen Füßen zerrissen.

⁵ Ihr habt kein Brot gegessen und keinen Wein und kein Bier getrunken, damit ihr erkennt (*têd-e'û*), dass (*kî*) ich YHWH bin, euer Gott. ^{6a} Und so kamt ihr bis an diesen Ort.

^{6b} Sihon, der König von Heschbon, und Og, der König des Baschan, sind gegen uns zum Kampf ausgerückt und wir haben sie geschlagen. ⁷ Wir haben ihnen ihr Land weggenommen und es den Rubenitern, den Gaditern und der Hälfte des Stammes der Manassiter als Erbesitz gegeben.

⁸ Darum bewahrt (*ûš-e'martam*) die Bestimmungen dieses Bundes und haltet (*wa'-a'sîtam*) sie, damit euch alles, was ihr tut, gelingt.

Der Rückblick beginnt mit dem Aufenthalt in Ägypten ⁷⁴. Er setzt wie 5,3 die Identifizierung der Exodus-Horeb- mit der Moabgeneration voraus. Vom Inhalt her ist die Erzählung dreiteilig: 29,1-3 und 4-6a handeln von den Großtaten Gottes in Ägypten und den Wundern auf dem vierzig-jährigen Wüstenzug Israels. Dagegen referieren die vv. 6b-7 rein innergeschichtlich den Sieg Moses und der Israeliten über die beiden Könige Sihon und Og sowie die Verteilung ihres Landes. Dabei redet Mose nicht mehr zu den versammelten Israeliten, sondern schließt sich mit ihnen im „Wir“ zusammen. „Die beiden ersten Teile sind parallel gebaut. Sie enthalten am Anfang eine Ortsangabe (‚Ägypten‘ – ‚Wüste‘), am Ende“ — allerdings mit zwei verschiedenen Syntagmen — „eine Bezugnahme auf die jetzige Situation (‚bis zu diesem Tag‘ – ‚bis zu diesem Ort‘). [...] Die Aussagen werden in Reihungen entfaltet. Den berichteten Begebenheiten folgt eine theologische Deutung (vv. 3.5b)“ ⁷⁵, die das Verhalten

⁷³ G liest hier statt der 1. Person die 3. Person Singular „und er hat geführt“ und ersetzt entsprechend auch das Personalpronomen „ich“ am Ende von v. 5 durch „Er (YHWH, euer Gott)“. Sie schließt damit aus, dass der ganze zweite Teil (vv. 4-6a) YHWH-Rede ist, wie sich das in M aufgrund des „Ich bin YHWH, euer Gott“ nahelegen kann. Deshalb ist M als *lectio difficilior* vorzuziehen. S. dazu auch unten.

⁷⁴ Zum Folgenden vgl. vor allem die detaillierte Untersuchung von GOMES DE ARAÚJO, *Theologie der Wüste*, 273-324. Dort findet sich auch eine umfassende Widerlegung der in verschiedenen Publikationen vertretenen These von E. Otto über das Verhältnis von Horeb-bund und Moabbund bzw. die damit verbundenen Redaktionen des Deuteronomiums (307-324). Ferner G. PAPOLA, *L'alleanza di Moab*. Studio esegetico teologico di Dt 28,69 – 30,20 (AnBib 174; Roma 2008) 55-96.

⁷⁵ LOHFINK, „Bundesschluß“, 59-60. Dagegen entwickelt GOMES DE ARAÚJO, *Theologie der Wüste*, 284-285, eine Struktur der Perikope, die den zweiten Teil auf die vv. 4-5 begrenzt. Sie enthielten als einzige eine Zeitangabe — „vierzig Jahre lang“ — und würden vom ersten und dritten Teil (vv. 1b-3 und 6-7) mit geographischen Angaben „im Land

Israels betrifft. Während aber v. 3 die mangelnde Einsicht konstatiert, nennt v. 5b die Erkenntnis YHWHs als Ziel seines Handelns und der Wunder.

Der Eröffnung der „Bundesworte“ 29,1-8 liegt eine ausschließlich im Deuteronomium belegte Redeform zugrunde — das Schema „Faktum – Erkenntnis – Appell“⁷⁶. Gegenüber der vorgeschlagenen Gliederung gruppiert es die Aussagen der Perikope anders und setzt auch die Akzente unterschiedlich. Jeder Teil dieser dreigliedrigen Kleinform wird durch ein Signalverb eingeführt, dessen Subjekt immer Israel ist. Seine hebräische Form ist in der Übersetzung oben in Klammern eingefügt. Zunächst wird auf selbst „geschaut“ (*r'h*) Taten Gottes in der Geschichte Israels zurückgeblickt (I). Aus ihnen soll eine Einsicht (*yd'*) über YHWH erschlossen werden, die mit einem durch „dass“ (*kî*) eingeleiteten Objektsatz formuliert ist (II). Abschließend ermahnt eine Paränese zu einer Folgerung für das Handeln (*šmr* [+ *šh*]) Israels (III). Dadurch werden die vv. 1b-5a als Erinnerung an Ägypten und die Wüste zusammengefasst, aus der in v. 5b die theologische Erkenntnis und in v. 8 die praktische Konsequenz für den folgenden Bundesschluss gezogen werden soll. Der „rein profane“ Rückblick auf die Kämpfe mit den beiden Amoriterkönigen und die Aufteilung ihres Landes wird also nicht der YHWH-Erkentnis zugeordnet und nimmt eine Sonderstellung ein. Das Schema ist noch in 4,32-40, 7,7-11, 8,2-16 und 11,2-7 belegt. Deshalb gibt es neben der spezifischen Form auch inhaltliche und formulierungsmäßige Gemeinsamkeiten dieser Perikopen mit 29,1b-8, auf die ich im Folgenden aufmerksam mache.

1. Die gottgewirkte Geschichte (vv. 1b-2 und 4-5a)

Der erste Teil (vv. 1b-2) spricht weder vom Auszug noch vom Zug durch das Meer, sondern nur vom Handeln Gottes am Pharao, seinem

Ägypten“ (v. 1b) und „bis an diesen Ort“ (v. 6a) gerahmt. Auch dass sich nur im zweiten Teil negierte Aussagen finden — die einzig positive Aussage lautet „ich habe euch geführt“ (v. 4a) — spreche für die vv. 4-5 „als umrahmte Zentralaussage“ (285). Diese Gliederung übersieht jedoch, dass „bis zum heutigen Tag“ in v. 3 eine Zeitangabe macht und dass die Wendung „bis zu diesem Ort“ in v. 6a auch über die Versabgrenzung hinweg eine Abschlussfunktion hat. Gomes de Araújo verweist 287-288 und 302-304 selbst auf die Formulierungsparallelen in 1,31; 9,7; 11,5, die den Wüstenzug stets auf den geographischen Punkt beziehen, an dem man angekommen ist und sich jetzt befindet. Daraus folgert er: „So ist 29,6a doppelgesichtig“ (288). Die beiden Umstandsbestimmungen „über das Hier und Jetzt der Angeredeten“ (285) in den vv. 3b und 6a werden also besser nicht als Rahmen der vv. 4-5 bestimmt (gegen 285). Insgesamt ergibt die Dreiteilung keine Hierarchisierung der Wüstenzeit (gegen 285-286). Wie Gomez de Araújo gliedert auch PAPOLA, *L'alleanza*, 60-61, die Perikope in die vv. 1-3, 4-5 und 6-8.

⁷⁶ LOHFINK, *Hauptgebot*, 125-128, spricht vom „Schema der Beweisführung“. Zum Folgenden vgl. G. BRAULIK, „Geschichtserinnerung und Gotteserkenntnis. Zu zwei Kleinformen im Buch Deuteronomium“, *Studien zu den Methoden der Deuteronomiumsexegese* (SBAB 42; Stuttgart 2006) 165-183, hier 175-180.

Hof und seinem Land Ägypten. Allerdings unterstreichen schon die Hinweise auf die Augenzeugenschaft Israels bei dem Begebnis — „ihr habt alles gesehen [...] vor eurem Augen“ (v. 1) und „deine Augen haben gesehen“ (v. 2) — den Kontrast zu den für die innere Wahrnehmung, das „Einsehen“ und „Verstehen“, fehlenden Organen (v. 3). Dass YHWH in Ägypten „am Pharao, allen seinen Dienern und seinem ganzen Land“ handelt, ist mit der Aussagenfolge in 34,11 identisch. Doch schreibt 29,1 die „Zeichen und Wunder“ Gott zu, 34,11 dagegen Mose. Liest man das Deuteronomium auf der Endtextebene und seiner literarischen Abfolge, dann folgt diese Parallele allerdings erst am Ende des Buches, im „Epitaph Moses“. Auf wichtigere Zusammenhänge verweist die Wendung „schwere Prüfungen“ (*hammassôt hagg^edolot*), die im Deuteronomium neben 29,2 nur noch 7,19 und 4,34 (*massôt*) verwenden. In 29,2 dient der vorausgestellte Ausdruck als „Leseanweisung“ für die Ereignisse in Ägypten, die „Zeichen und Wunder“, qualifiziert und deutet sie ⁷⁷. 29,1b-2 knüpft trotz mancher Formulierungsunterschiede an diese beiden Passagen an. Außerdem markiert der Codewechsel ⁷⁸ zur singularischen Anrede Israels im Relativsatz „die deine Augen gesehen haben“ 29,2 als Zitat, weist also den Leser ausdrücklich darauf hin, dass Gedanken und Wendungen aus einem anderen Text aufgegriffen werden. Die in der folgenden Übersetzung von 7,18-19 kursiv gesetzten Gemeinsamkeiten mit dem Wortmaterial von 29,2 zeigen aber, dass 29,2 vor den Formeln, die in 7,19 für die Herausführung und Rettung am Meer stehen, abbricht: „Du sollst an das denken, *was YHWH, dein Gott, mit dem Pharao und mit ganz Ägypten gemacht hat: an die schweren Prüfungen, die du mit deinen Augen gesehen hast, an die Zeichen und Wunder*, an die starke Hand und den hocherhobenen Arm, mit denen YHWH, dein Gott, dich herausgeführt hat“. 29,2 beschränkt sich also auf die Ereignisse in Ägypten. Seine Elemente „Pharao – alle Diener – Ägypten“ finden sich nur noch in Ex 12,30 im Zusammenhang mit der Tötung der Erstgeburt, mit der die Plagenerzählungen ihr Ziel, die Entlassung der Israeliten aus Ägypten, erreichen ⁷⁹. Nach dem Buch Exodus sollten die Plagen vor allem bei den Ägyptern zur Erkenntnis YHWHs führen. Das dürfte auch der Grund dafür sein, dass Dtn 29,2 alle weiteren Anspielungen auf den Auszug ausklammert: Denn auf eine Erkenntnis YHWHs läuft ja auch die in 29,1b-5 skizzierte Geschichte Israels hinaus. Auch 4,34, die noch breitere nächstverwandte Parallele zu 29,2, zeigt, dass der Exodus und alles Folgende in diesem

⁷⁷ I. SCHULMEISTER, *Israels Befreiung aus Ägypten*. Eine Formeluntersuchung zur Theologie des Deuteronomiums (ÖBS 36; Frankfurt am Main 2010) z.B. 29.

⁷⁸ Vgl. GOMES DE ARAÚJO, *Theologie der Wüste*, 292.

⁷⁹ SCHULMEISTER, *Israels Befreiung*, 138-139.

Vers bewusst ausgelassen werden. Allerdings beschreibt 4,34-35a die Befreiung aus Ägypten als ein gewaltsames Herausreißen: „[...] eine Nation mitten aus einer anderen herauszuholen (*lāqahat*), unter Prüfungen, unter Zeichen und Wundern und Krieg, mit starker Hand und hoherhobenem Arm und unter großem Schrecken wie alles, was YHWH, euer Gott, in Ägypten für euch gemacht hat, vor deinen Augen? Du hast (das) sehen dürfen, damit du erkennst (*lādaʿat*)“. Auch hier wechselt der Numerus in „(vor) deinen Augen“ und „du hast sehen dürfen“ wie in 29,2 und 7,19 in den Singular. Vor allem aber zielt die Augenzeugenschaft (4,34, vgl. 7,19)⁸⁰ auf eine einzigartige YHWH-Erkenntnis (4,35, vgl. 7,9). Der Rückbezug auf 7,18-19 bzw. 4,34-35 beweist, dass die Aussagen von 29,1b-2 auf die nach 29,3 fehlende „Einsicht“ hinauslaufen⁸¹. Auffallend ist außerdem, dass 29,1b-2 die Geschehnisse am Horeb nicht erwähnt. Die Zeugenschaft Israels beschränkt sich ja auf das „Sehen“, das v. 1b der syntaktisch zusammenhängenden Periode prononciert vorausstellt (*ʾattāem r-ʿītam*) und das v. 2 wiederholt. Vom „Hören“ bzw. einer Ohrenzeugenschaft wird nicht gesprochen. Es fehlt jede Anspielung auf die aus dem Feuer vernommene Gottesstimme, obwohl sich dafür zum Beispiel 4,33 im Zusammenhang mit 4,34 als Referenztext angeboten hätte. Deshalb lässt sich schon an dieser Stelle vermuten, dass der Bundesbruch Israels am Horeb mit Schweigen übergangen werden soll.

Auch 29,4-5 knüpft an einen im Deuteronomium vorausgegangenen Text, nämlich an 8,2-5, an. Wiederum wird der Rückbezug auf diese singularischen Verse durch einen doppelten Numerusumsprung vom Plural der Verse 29,4a.5 in den Singular 29,4b kenntlich gemacht. In 8,2 verweist Mose auf die vierzig Jahre, in denen YHWH das Volk in der Wüste geführt hat (*hlk* Hifil). Von den vier Hifil-Belegen dieses Verbs im Deuteronomium stehen zwei in 8,2 und 15, die weiteren beiden in 28,36 und 29,4. Gemeinsam ist allen Stellen, dass YHWH führt. Zwar findet sich nur in 29,4 die erste Person Singular (vgl. Jos 24,3), doch legt sich YHWH als Subjekt durch 29,5b nahe, wo unvermittelt die Selbstvorstellungsformel „Ich bin YHWH, euer Gott“ steht⁸². Ist YHWH in 29,4a das Subjekt, sprechen 29,4b.5a von seinen Wundern. Dann wurde Israel statt mit „Brot“ wie in 8,3.16 mit Manna gespeist und erhielt es statt alkoholischer Getränke wie in 8,15 „im ausgedörrten Land, wo es kein Wasser gab, [...] Wasser

⁸⁰ Zum „Element der Augenzeugenschaft“, vgl. SCHULMEISTER, *Israels Befreiung*, 22-24 und 154-155.

⁸¹ Zur Verstockungsüberlieferung in Jes 6,9-10, auf die Dtn 29,3 anspielt, vgl. GOMES DE ARAÚJO, *Theologie der Wüste*, 293-294.

⁸² Für 29,4 als YHWH-Rede ließe sich auch anführen, dass die Stelle Am 2,10 aufnimmt, wo YHWH spricht — vgl. GOMES DE ARAÚJO, *Theologie der Wüste*, 295-296.

aus dem Felsen“⁸³. Wie in 8,4 fielen ihm auf dem Weg durch die Wüste auch nach 29,4b seine Kleider nicht in Lumpen vom Leib. Während nach 8,4 seine Füße nicht anschwellen, sind nach 29,4b seine Sandalen nicht zerrissen — ein verdeckter Vorverweis auf die „Fremden“ beim Bundeschluss in Moab, denen (angeblich) Gleiches widerfahren war⁸⁴. Dennoch wird man es wohl dabei belassen müssen, dass die Ich-Rede in 29,4-5 wie öfters im Deuteronomium zwischen Gott und Mose bewusst oszilliert und dass ihre Stimmen ineinander übergehen⁸⁵. Doch führt am Höhepunkt der beiden Texte und entsprechend dem zugrundliegenden „Schema der Beweisführung“ in 8,5 und 29,5 „die Wunderexistenz in der Wüste zu Jahweerkennntnis“⁸⁶. In 8,5 ist es sogar eine Erkenntnis „mit dem Herzen“ (*w^eyāda’tā ’im l^ebābækā*), wie sie nach 29,3 (*lēb lāda’at*) Israel angesichts der Ägyptenereignisse noch nicht gegeben worden war.

2. Die gottgeschenkte Erkenntnis YHWHs als des Bundespartners Israels (vv. 3 und 5b)

Zwischen dem „bis heute“ fehlenden Begreifen der göttlichen Großtaten in Ägypten (v. 3) und der Einsicht, zu der die Wunderexistenz auf dem Wüstenzug führen will (v. 5b), schlägt das Verb „erkennen“ (*yd’*) eine Stichwortbrücke. Zwar hat sich Gott in Ägypten kundgetan, doch

⁸³ Vgl. Chr. BEGG, „‘Bread, Wine and Strong Drink’ in Deut 29,5a“, *Bijdr.* 41 (1980) 266-275, hier 266-267. Begg versteht den Entzug von Brot, Wein und Bier als ein weiteres Wunder auf dem Wüstenzug: „so he [YHWH] denied to Israel those potential hindrances to ‚spiritual perception‘ bread, wine and strong drink, supplying their need for physical nourishment rather by a miraculous food and drink which would facilitate their discerning him as ‚the Lord their God‘“ (274). Vgl. PAPOLA, *L’alleanza*, 80-83. Dtn 8,3.(15-16) und 29,5 gehören zu einem siebengliedrigen Aussagensystem über „Speise und Trank zwischen Exodus und Moabbund“. Dabei sind einander zugeordnet: das Fasten Moses 40 Tage vor der Übernahme der Bundestafeln am Horeb (9,9) bzw. wegen der Sünde Israels (9,18) und Israels Nichtgenuss von Speisen 40 Jahre lang in der Wüste (29,5). In beiden Fällen diene die Enthaltung der Vorbereitung auf die Gottesbegegnung beim Horeb- bzw. Moabbund. (G. BRAULIK, „Alltägliche Ernährung und festliches Mahl im Buch Deuteronomium. Vom Essen Israels in der Wüste, im Verheißungsland und im Tempel“, *Tora und Fest*, 100-141, hier 104-112).

⁸⁴ Der Unterschied hängt mit der intertextuellen Beziehung zu Jos 9,4-5.12-13 und den Gibeonitern zusammen, die nach 29,10 als „Fremde in deinem Lager“ Partner des Moabbundes werden — vgl. G. BRAULIK, „Die Völkervernichtung und die Rückkehr Israels ins Verheißungsland. Hermeneutische Bemerkungen zum Buch Deuteronomium“, *Studien zum Deuteronomium und seiner Nachgeschichte* (SBAB 33; Stuttgart 2001) 113-150, hier 137-140. Vgl. GOMES DE ARAÚJO, *Theologie der Wüste*, 298-299.

⁸⁵ Vgl. LENCHAK, *Choose Life*, 11 und Anm. 50 (mit 7,4; 11,13-15; 17,3; 28,20 als Beispielen) sowie 183 und Anm. 32. Jedenfalls sind es keine „stilistische[n] Entgleisungen“, wie G. v. RAD, „Deuteronomium-Studien“, *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament Band II* (ThB 48; München 1973) 109-153, hier 110, meint.

⁸⁶ GOMES DE ARAÚJO, *Theologie der Wüste*, 298.

hat er Israel bisher nicht die Organe gegeben, um seine Offenbarung wirklich zu verstehen — vor allem kein „Herz zum Erkennen“ (*lēb lādaʿat*)⁸⁷, aber auch nicht seine Voraussetzungen, „Augen zum Sehen und Ohren zum Hören“ (v. 3)⁸⁸. Diesen drei Infinitiven fehlt ein Objekt⁸⁹. Das wird erst in v. 5b am Ende des Zugs nach Moab als Absicht Gottes genannt, nämlich die Erkenntnis der Israeliten (*leʿmaʿan tēdeʿû*): „Ich bin YHWH, euer Gott“⁹⁰.

Diese theologische Einsicht, auf die tendenziell die ganze Zeit des Noch-Nicht-Erkennens in 29,3.5a ausgerichtet war, hat in den Texten des bereits erwähnten Schemas, das Geschichtserinnerung, Gotteserkenntnis und Paränese in einem festen Verbalgerüst miteinander verbindet, ihre engste Entsprechung. Von ihnen kommen insbesondere 8,1-6 oder 4,32-40 in Frage. Die Übereinstimmungen von 29,4-5 mit 8,2-5 wurden eben genannt. In 4,39 heißt es: „So sollst du heute erkennen (*wʿyādaʿtā*) und dir zu Herzen nehmen (*wahʾšēbotā ʾel lʿbābākā*): YHWH — er ist der Gott“. Wie in 29,1b-6a geht es um die Wahrnehmung YHWHs in seinem Handeln in der Vergangenheit — in 4,39 als des einzigen Gottes, in 29,5b als des Gottes Israels: „Ich (*ʾanī*) bin YHWH, euer Gott“⁹¹. Die

⁸⁷ Zum Gebrauch von „Herz“ (*lēb, lēbāb*) in Dtn 29–30 vgl. E. EHRENREICH, *Wähle das Leben!* Deuteronomium 30 als hermeneutischer Schlüssel zur Tora (BZABR 14; Wiesbaden 2010) 165–169.

⁸⁸ Vgl. GOMES DE ARAÚJO, *Theologie der Wüste*, 312–313. Die Reaktion Israels ist zwar der Offenbarung nicht angemessen, aber sie ist nicht schuldhaft. 29,3 muss im Kontext der vv. 1b–6a ausgelegt werden, umfassende Konkordanzuntersuchungen helfen hier nicht weiter — z.B. gegen P.A. BARKER, *The Triumph of Grace in Deuteronomy*. Faithless Israel, Faithful Yahweh in Deuteronomy (PBM 8; Waynesboro, GA 2004) 129: „29:3 draws together many important motifs of Deuteronomy concerning Israel’s response to Yahweh. Its tripartite statement is thus an entirely appropriate summary of Yahweh’s demands in Deuteronomy. [...] In drawing these threads together, v. 3 highlights Israel’s failure to meet Yahweh’s demands“. Analoges gilt für M.A. GRISANTI, „Was Israel Unable to Respond to God? A Study of Deuteronomy 29:2–4“, *BS* 163 (2006) 176–196, der fünf in der Forschungsgeschichte vertretene Erklärungen präsentiert und schließlich feststellt: „The reason God had not given this ability to perceive spiritually His activities for Israel’s benefit is that most of them did not enjoy a faith relationship with Him. This divine verdict about their lack of genuine perception should have led the Israelites to commit themselves wholeheartedly to this covenant relationship with Yahweh“ (196).

⁸⁹ Darauf macht PAPOLA, *L’alleanza*, 71, aufmerksam und interpretiert diese Beobachtung wie folgt: Beziehe man die Verben zurück auf die Wunder und Zeichen, sei das „Hören“ schwer zu erklären. Berücksichtige man noch die folgenden Verse, sei ein Gotteswort zu hören, das die Israeliten zur Erkenntnis bringe, dass YHWH ihr Gott ist.

⁹⁰ Nach LOHFINK, *Hauptgebot*, 128 Anm. 5, spiegelt 29,3–5 „eine Theorie des Vortrags der Heilsgeschichte: zuerst wurde die Geschichte in ihrer reinen Faktizität erlebt, und erst jetzt, beim (kultischen) Vortrag, gibt Jahwe die Gnade, wirklich zu sehen, zu hören und zu begreifen, was eigentlich geschah“.

⁹¹ Ein intratextueller Bezug — entweder auf 8,5 oder noch wahrscheinlicher auf 4,39 (s. u.), jedenfalls auf einen Deuteronomiumstext — dürfte näher liegen, als die beiden von GOMES DE ARAÚJO, *Theologie der Wüste*, 293–295, für 29,3 intertextuell herangezogenen

undeuteronomische Sprachgestalt — ^anî statt des üblichen ^ānokî — dürfte signalisieren, dass 29,5 mit dieser Formel auch auf die Erkenntnisaussage der Erzählung über die Speisung in der Wüste, nämlich auf Ex 16,12, anspielt: Israel darf aus diesem Wunder leben, obwohl es murren; doch wird von Schuld und Strafe nicht gesprochen⁹². Die gleiche Formel — allerdings mit ^ānokî und dem Singular des enklitischen Personalpronomens in ^wlohêkâ — eröffnet in 5,6 den Horebbundestext, den Dekalog. Vor allem aber verweist sie voraus auf den Bundesschluss in Moab, dessen Inhalt sie bildet: „dich heute als sein Volk einzusetzen und dein Gott zu werden“ (29,12). Im Moabbund findet also das Sehen, Hören und Erkennen statt, das Israel bisher noch nicht geschenkt worden war. Dazu ist es „bis zu diesem Tag“ (v. 3)⁹³ und „bis zu diesem Ort“ (v. 6a) gekommen. Durch diesen Unterschied übertrifft der Moabbund auf Seiten des menschlichen Partners den Horebbund.

3. Kriegszüge und Landverteilung östlich des Jordan (vv. 6b-7)

In 29,6b-7, dem Resümee der Eroberungen im Ostjordanland, deckt sich fast der gesamte Wortbestand, sogar die „Wir“-Form der Verben, mit Formulierungen der Kap. 2–3. Die Kongruenzen beginnen in 29,6b bei 2,32 und enden in 29,7b mit 3,13⁹⁴. Zugleich verdeutlichen die Übereinstimmungen, dass 29,6b-7 bestimmte charakteristische Wendungen der ersten Moserede vermeidet. So fehlt der göttlich gebotene Vernichtungskrieg (*hēraem*) gegen die beiden Amoriterkönige. Auch kämpft Israel ohne ausdrücklichen Befehl und ohne Mitwirkung YHWHs. Und nur hier im Deuteronomium wird das weggenommene Land nicht von YHWH übereignet, sondern „gibt“ es Mose zusammen mit Israel den zweieinhalb Stämmen. Die einseitige Darstellung und völlig untheologische Sprache der vv. 6b-7 steht also in hartem Gegensatz zur vorausgegangenen Beschreibung der

exakten Formulierungsparellenen Jes 6,10 und Jer 24,7, die aber durchaus auch im Hintergrund gestanden sein können. Doch geht es bei der Verstockungsaussage Jes 6,10 um eine andere geschichtliche Situation und fehlt in Dtn 29,3 jede Konnotation von Sünde (295). Jer 24,7 dürfte trotz seiner übereinstimmenden Formulierungen und deren Abfolge in Dtn 29–30 eher ein Kurzresümee der beiden Kapitel sein als dass die Jer 24,7 entsprechenden Formulierungen sukzessive im Lauf der Abfassung der mehrschichtigen Kapitel in diese eingefügt wurden — gegen 277-278.

⁹² Zum Nachweis s. GOMES DE ARAÚJO, *Theologie der Wüste*, 300-302.

⁹³ Diese Wendung wird von CAMPBELL, *Remembering*, 140-144, ausführlich diskutiert. Wenn sie wie in 29,3 in direkter Anrede steht, „represents a claim regarding a present reality from the perspective of the speaker, yet does so without precluding changes in the future“ (141).

⁹⁴ BRAULIK, „Völkervernichtung“, 136-138; GOMES DE ARAÚJO, *Theologie der Wüste*, 304-306.

Ereignisse in Ägypten und in der Wüste. Der Kurzbericht betrifft nur die beiden letzten Jahre des Wüstenaufenthalts und die Eroberungen im Ostjordanland (2,24 – 3,17). Diese Beschränkung provoziert die Frage: Wird von 29,1b-7 die davor liegende Zeit von Ägypten an schweigend übergangen? Die einzigen Lexemaufnahmen aus Kap. 1–2 vor dem göttlichen Befehl zur Überquerung des Arnontals (2,24) finden sich in 29,1b und 6a. Sie rahmen also gewissermaßen den Rückblick auf die Geschichte in Ägypten und in der Wüste. In 29,1b erinnert Mose an „alles, was YHWH vor euren Augen im Land Ägypten getan hat“ — darauf hatte er schon in 1,30b verwiesen: „wie alles, das er [YHWH, euer Gott] mit euch an den Ägyptern vor euren Augen getan hat“. Die Abschlussbemerkung in 29,6a „Und so kamt ihr bis an diesen Ort“ hat eine Parallele⁹⁵ im folgenden Vers 1,31: „und in der Wüste, die du gesehen hast. Da hat YHWH, dein Gott, dich auf dem ganzen Weg, den ihr gewandert seid, getragen, wie ein Mann sein Kind trägt, bis ihr an diesen Ort kamt“. Was dann beiseitegelassen wird, ist das „Trotzdem habt ihr nicht an YHWH, euren Gott, geglaubt“ (1,32), also die irrationale Sünde in Kadesch-Barnea, und als deren Folge die achtunddreißig Jahre des strafweisen Aussterben der Ägypten-Horeb-Generation in der Wüste (2,14). Weil auch der Horeb „genauso wie die anderen Orte in der Wüste ein Ort der Steifnackigkeit, der Provokation göttlicher Ungnade, der Sohnesunbotmäßigkeit und damit des Schuldigseins vor Gott“⁹⁶ ist (vgl. 9,7-24), wird auch er aus den vierzig (!) Jahren Wüstenzug (29,3) ausgeklammert⁹⁷.

Der gesamte historische Rückblick 29,1-7 ist durch Intratextualitäten an strukturellen Schnittstellen (vv. 1b und 6a) und im Formulierungsmosaik des dritten Abschnitts (vv.6b-7) an die Erzählung Moses am Anfang des Buches (Kap. 1–3) zurückgebunden. Die Erinnerung an die Vergangenheit dient dem Verständnis des Bundesschlusses in Moab: „Da verblassen Sünde und ergangene Strafen, nur die wunderbare Führung durch Jahwe auf diesen Punkt hin steht vor Augen. Alles, was die Zeit der Wüste füllte,

⁹⁵ Die Wendung ist in der Hebräischen Bibel nur an fünf Stellen des Deuteronomiums belegt — neben 1,31 und 29,6 noch in 9,7; 11,5; 26,9, die „mit den drei entscheidenden Aspekten der bisher im Deuteronomium entwickelten Theologie der 40 Jahre Wüste verbunden“ sind — GOMES DE ARAÚJO, *Theologie der Wüste*, 302-304, Zitat 304.

⁹⁶ GOMES DE ARAÚJO, *Theologie der Wüste*, 312.

⁹⁷ Das spricht gegen die Analogie, die J. TASCHNER, *Mosereden*, 291-292, zwischen dem Horeb- und Moabbund feststellt: „Wie im Horebbund geht es darum, dass Jhwh seine Verheißungen trotz der Abwege Israels hält und seinem Volk dennoch seine Gesetze und Weisungen gibt, nur dass an Stelle des Gusses des Stierbildes nun die Kundschaftererzählung tritt. Im Rahmen des Horebbundes erhält Israel trotz seiner Abwege neue Tafeln, im Rahmen des Moabbundes empfängt es trotz seines mangelnden Vertrauens in der Kundschaftergeschichte im Auftrag Jhwhs die Gesetze, die Mose am Horeb empfangen hatte“.

war gottgelenkte und gottgetragene Vorgeschichte, noch ohne eigentliche Begegnung mit Gott, hin auf diesen Augenblick, wo Israel seinen Gott Jahwe erkennen wird“⁹⁸.

IV. GNADE UND VERPFLICHTUNG IM „HEUTE“ DES BUNDES

Israels Geschichte beweist: Allein die einseitig durchgehaltene Treue YHWHs zu seinem Volk macht es möglich, den am Horeb geschlossenen Bund „heute“ im Moabbund aufzunehmen. Deshalb kann der Zeitabstand zwischen beiden als aufgehoben gelten. Die rituellen Akte der beiden Bundesschlüsse bleiben zwar nach 28,69 deutlich voneinander unterschieden. Doch ist das Bundesverhältnis zwischen YHWH und Israel ein und dasselbe. Wenn YHWH mit dem Volk aufgrund des verlesenen Vertragsdokuments vom Horeb „heute“ in Moab einen Bund schließt (29,9-14; 26,17-19; 30,15-20; 27,1.9-10)⁹⁹, bestätigt er damit seine niemals aufgegebene Beziehung zu Israel. Deshalb kann auch die Exodus-Horeb mit der Moabgeneration identifiziert werden. Ebenso bilden Horeb- und Moabbund, obwohl sie auf verschiedene Bundesschlussakte und in Moab auch auf eine erweiterte Horeb-Bundesurkunde zurückgehen, in ihren Verpflichtungen eine vollkommene Einheit. Wichtig ist, dass dieser Rechtsakt die „heute“ Anwesenden wie die „heute“ Nichtanwesenden zu Bundespartnern erklärt und damit den Bundesschluss sogar für alle künftigen Generationen¹⁰⁰ öffnet (29,13-14)¹⁰¹.

Nach 29,1-8 besteht die Gnade dieses Mose-„Heute“ darin, im Eidesritual von Moab den Sinn und das Ziel der Geschichte von Ägypten „bis zu diesem Tag“ erkennen zu lassen. Denn alles, was Israel in der Vergangenheit durch YHWH erfahren durfte, sollte auf seine unverändert gültige

⁹⁸ GOMES DE ARAÚJO, *Theologie der Wüste*, 328. Die Wüstentheologie von 29,1-7 bildet schon aufgrund ihrer Schlussposition im Deuteronomium den „Deutungsschlüssel für alles, was vorher über die Zeit vom Auszug aus Ägypten bis zur Ankunft am Ostufer des Jordan gelesen werden konnte“ (331).

⁹⁹ Bei diesen Teiltexen des Bundesschlusses handelt es sich in 29,9-14 um „primär performative Sprechakte“, mit denen das unmittelbar bevorstehende Vertragsritual eröffnet wird, an den weiteren Stellen um „explizit performative Sprechakte“, die bewirken, was sie aussprechen, nämlich den Moabbundesschluss. Während 26,17-19 den Vertragsinhalt protokolliert und 30,15-20 zur Entscheidung auffordert, referiert 27,1 die Zustimmung Israels und 27,9-10 die Zustimmung Gottes. Vgl. BRAULIK, „Heute“, 73-79.

¹⁰⁰ LENCHAK, *Choose Life*, 102-105.

¹⁰¹ „Deuteronomy’s implied reader, living on the land in post-Mosaic times, quite obviously stands *after* the undeniable, yet never told, Moab covenant. This covenant, however, is fully conditional; and, though sealed in the past, it is, and always will be, in need of continued endorsement. Deuteronomy achieves the *tour de force* of recording a covenant that took place once and for all while presenting it as still dependent on the reader’s reception“ (SONNET, *Book*, 246).

Zusage „Ich bin YHWH, euer Gott“ (29,5) in der Bundesformel vorbereiten: „dich heute als sein Volk einzusetzen und selbst dein Gott zu sein“ (29,12; vgl. 26,17-19) ¹⁰².

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SUMMARY

When Moses transfers the leadership of Israel to Joshua, the former must first reconfirm the Horeb Covenant through a covenant made at Moab. Therefore, Moses summons the typically Deuteronomic Exodus-Horeb-Moab-Generation “today”, that is the day of Deuteronomy. In Deut 5,1-5 he declares that those who take part in the making of the Covenant at Moab already had been partners in the Horeb Covenant. In 29,1-8 he demonstrates that YHWH had graciously maintained his relationship with his people. It is this grace that “today” creates the very possibility of Israel’s entering into the Covenant at Moab with YHWH, who is *their* God.

¹⁰² Ich danke Norbert Lohfink SJ für die kritische Lektüre des Manuskripts.

SOLOMON'S JUDGMENT: THE META-RIDDLE

In the biblical story of Solomon's Judgment (1 Kgs 3,16-28) ¹, two women come and stand before the king. One of the women gives an account that can be summarized as follows: "I and the other woman live together; we each gave birth to a son within a few days of each other; the other woman's son died because she lay on him; she then switched the boys in the middle of the night while I was asleep; but I saw in the morning that the boy with me was not the son I had borne". The other woman responds by insisting that the living son is hers and the dead son is her rival's.

The story can be characterized as a riddle ². It poses the question of how the king can determine which woman is the true mother ³ (vv. 16-23), and then it provides a clever and satisfying answer to the question (vv. 24-28) ⁴. The king commands that the living boy be cut in two and half of him be given to each woman, and he then observes the reactions of the women. The woman who pleads to give the boy to the other woman rather than cut him in half proves herself to be the true mother.

But there is a second question that arises in the story: Which woman is the one who turns out to be the true mother? Is it the plaintiff, the woman

I thank Idan Dershowitz and Itai Kagan for their helpful comments.

¹ "Solomon's Judgment" is actually a misnomer. The only connection of the story to Solomon is that it is embedded in the account of Solomon's reign in the Book of Kings (1 Kgs 2,12 – 11,43). In the story's thirteen verses, the name "Solomon" is not mentioned even once, and there is no indication until the story's inessential final verse that the trial even happened in Israel. For comparison, the account of the Queen of Sheba's embassy (1 Kgs 10,1-13), which is the other story in Kings that serves in its setting to illustrate Solomon's wisdom, and which happens to have the same number of verses, mentions Solomon's name seven times (vv. 1, 2, 3, 4, 10, and 13[×2]). See also S.J. DeVRIES, *1 Kings* (WBC 12; Waco, TX 2003) 57-58.

² See the retelling of the story by Josephus (*Ant.* 8.26-34), who says (8.30) that the trial's audience were mentally blinded concerning the case's solution "as if by a riddle". The word translated as "riddle", αἰνύμα (whence English "enigma"), is the same as that used, for example, by the Septuagint for the tests of wisdom (חידות) that the Queen of Sheba posed to Solomon (1 Kgs 10,1), and by Josephus for the tests that Solomon and Hiram sent to each other (*Ant.* 8.148-149 = *Ag. Ap.* 1.114-115).

³ I will use the term "true mother" as shorthand for "biological mother of the living boy", although, strictly speaking, the story presumes that both women are true mothers.

⁴ As noted by Sternberg, the story obeys the fair-play rule of modern detective stories "whereby the reader must be given the same data to make inferences from as the detective himself" (M. STERNBERG, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*. Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading [Bloomington, IN 1987] 167).

who gave the account, or is it the defendant, the woman who responded to the account? Some scholars have characterized this question, too, as a riddle ⁵. This second question is the topic of the present paper, in which I will attempt to do four things: first, confirm that it is in fact a riddle, i.e., not an ordinary interpretive problem but a deliberate feature of the story — a product of authorial design; second, provide a reasonably full picture of its interpretation history; third, solve the riddle; fourth, show the effect of textual criticism on it.

I. DELIBERATE DESIGN

We can discern three literary sacrifices, as it were, made by the story's author which prove that our question is a product of her conception rather than chance. These sacrifices become clearer upon comparison of the story with its extra-biblical parallels, of which Hugo Gressmann collected eleven ⁶.

The first sacrifice is the breaking of the symmetry between the two women. The story's first, basic riddle is predicated on there being no way to decide the case other than through the king's gambit. This is why the author specifies at the outset that the women are prostitutes (v. 16), which establishes that there are no identifiable fathers to interrogate, and then has the plaintiff emphasize that the two women live alone (v. 18), thus establishing that there will be no witnesses to summon. By nature, the first riddle also works better the fewer differences there are between the two women. This is why the author twice emphasizes the essential symmetry between them, once in the narrator's voice (v. 22) and once in the king's voice (v. 23). Now, the author could have kept the symmetry intact

⁵ S. LASINE, "The Riddle of Solomon's Judgment and the Riddle of Human Nature in the Hebrew Bible", *JSOT* 45 (1989) 61-86, here 61; E. HADAD, "Solomon's Judgment", *Megadim* 27 (1997) 101-111 (Hebrew), here 103; A. REINHARTZ, *Why Ask My Name?* Anonymity and Identity in Biblical Narrative (New York 1998) 109; M. GARSIEL, "Revealing and Concealing as a Narrative Strategy in Solomon's Judgment (1 Kings 3:16-28)", *CBQ* 64 (2002) 229-247, here 247; IDEM, "Two Harlot Mothers and One Living Infant — Three Riddles in Solomon's Judgment", *Beit Mikra* 49 (2004) 32-53 (Hebrew), here 32; E. NIMNI, "Solomon's Judgment: How Did the King Determine Who the Real Mother Is?", *Megadim* 56 (2016) 59-73 (Hebrew), here 60; L. MAZOR, "Revealed and Concealed Morals in the Bible: A Demonstration from 'Solomon's Judgment,' 1 Kgs 3:16-18" (2020), online: <https://mikrarevivim.blogspot.com/2019/01/28-16.html>, n.p. (Hebrew).

⁶ H. GRESSMANN, "Das Salomonische Urteil", *Deutsche Rundschau* 130 (1907) 212-228, online: <https://archive.org/details/deutscherundsch130stutuoft/page/212>. The relevant parallels are nos. 1-4 and 6-12 in Gressmann's numbering; no. 5 is the biblical story itself; nos. 13-17 are more distantly related stories; nos. 18-22 are works of visual art that depict the biblical story or one similar to it.

throughout by simply saying that each of the two women claimed the living child as their own, as was in fact done in four of Gressmann's parallels ⁷. But then the question, "which woman is the true mother", would be meaningless. Instead, the author has one woman telling an elaborate story of a kidnapping and the other woman responding with a simple denial, allowing us to speak of "the plaintiff" and "the defendant". There is an additional and otherwise unnecessary breaking of the symmetry: the plaintiff's unchallenged assertion that the births were not on the same day but that her rival bore a son "on the third day" after she gave birth. This allows us to speak of the plaintiff also as "the first mother" and the defendant as "the second mother".

The author's second sacrifice is that, even while breaking the symmetry between the two women, the story still does not tell us what really happened before they came to the king. Had it done so, we would be more invested in the story, having met the women as mothers rather than litigants and having encountered an identifiable victim whom we would want to see receiving justice. This is the strategy adopted in six of Gressmann's parallels ⁸. Instead, however, the biblical story uniquely omits any direct narration of the background events and provides only an account in the voice of one of the disputants, the truth of which account we cannot immediately determine.

The third sacrifice is that, having raised the question of whether the plaintiff or the defendant is the true mother and having left it standing throughout, the story sets up for itself, at its climax, a perfect opportunity to answer the question and then noticeably fails to do so, damaging the dramatic effect by the omission. When the true mother reveals herself to the king (v. 26), she could have been revealed to the readers as well if the story had identified her as "the plaintiff/defendant" or with some similar label ⁹. Had the story done so, it would have resembled Gressmann's last parallel, the only one which raises the question at all and the only one which is clearly and indisputably derived from the biblical account ¹⁰. Instead, our story identifies the true mother at this point, prematurely and

⁷ GRESSMANN, "Salomonische Urteil", nos. 2 (p. 214), 8 (p. 219), 11 (p. 221), 12 (pp. 221-222).

⁸ GRESSMANN, "Salomonische Urteil", nos. 1 (pp. 213-214), 3 (p. 215), 4 (pp. 215-216), 6 (p. 219), 9 (p. 220), 10 (pp. 220-221). Also in the retelling of our story by Josephus, the plaintiff is identified at the beginning of the trial as the true mother; see below.

⁹ As done in Josephus' retelling of our story; see below.

¹⁰ GRESSMANN, "Salomonische Urteil", no. 7 (p. 219). The judge in the story (from *Sahih al-Bukhari* Prophets 637, Inheritance Laws 760) is identified as Solomon. The story distinguishes between the two women only towards its end, with the labels "the elder" and "the younger", soon after which the younger is revealed as the true mother.

redundantly, as “the woman whose son was the living one” (האשה אשר בנה החי).

Thus, the question of which woman turned out to be the true mother is a riddle that the story's author composed by carefully making room for, creating, and sustaining ambiguity. Built upon the story's more obvious riddle of how the king can decide the case, it may be called a second-level riddle or a meta-riddle. It illustrates the biblical authors' highly sophisticated management of ambiguity for literary purposes.

II. INTERPRETATION HISTORY

Since Josephus, readers of the story have opined on whether the plaintiff or the defendant is the true mother. In searching for possible clues, we may distinguish between clues that would have been visible to the king before the beginning of his response (v. 23) and those that would have been visible to him only after that point, or not at all, such as clues created by the narrator's choice of words. Some scholars believe, a priori, that the story cannot contain clues of the first kind, because they would damage the integrity of the first-level riddle by providing a solution to it that would render the king's solution unnecessary ¹¹. I disagree. A satisfactory solution to the first-level riddle has to involve reasoning that is strong enough to convince the audience of the trial within the story that justice was done, but a satisfactory solution to the second-level riddle does not. In other words, legal truth requires a higher standard of proof than literary truth. A clue available to the king within the story could meet the lower standard without meeting the higher standard, in which case the king's solution would still be necessary and the integrity of the first-level riddle would be preserved ¹².

1. *Plaintiff*

For most of the story's reception history, the observable tendency of readers was to side with the plaintiff. The first to do so explicitly was Josephus, who, towards the beginning of his retelling (*Ant.* 8.27), called her “she who appeared to be the one wronged” (ἡ ἀδικεῖσθαι δοκοῦσα) and, towards its end (8.32), identified the true mother as “the one who had

¹¹ G.A. RENDSBURG, “The Guilty Party in 1 Kings III 16-28”, *VT* 48 (1998) 534-541, here 535; MAZOR, “Revealed and Concealed”, n.p.

¹² See GARSIEL, “Revealing and Concealing”, 241-242; IDEM, “Two Harlot Mothers”, 46.

demanded” (τῆς μὲν ἀπαιτούσης), namely the plaintiff. Analyses of Josephus’ retelling have not offered an explanation of his reasoning here ¹³. Perhaps he thought that the very fact that she brings suit is proof enough in her favor. This seems to be the reasoning of the commentator Joseph ibn Kaspi (1279-1340), who wrote that the first woman introduced in the story is the true mother “because she is the one crying out” (כי היא המתרעמת) ¹⁴.

Isaac Abrabanel (1437-1508) may have been the first to develop a coherent argument in the plaintiff’s favor. In his commentary, he wrote that the plaintiff is the true mother and that the reason the defendant, as opposed to her rival, speaks tersely is that she is lying and does not want to trip up in her words: הנתבעת לא רצתה להרבות בדברים פן תכשל בדבריה ויהיו מחתה לה ¹⁵. One could respond to this argument by noting that if the defendant is the true mother, then no switch took place, and thus there would be nothing for her to say beyond what she actually says ¹⁶.

David ibn Zimra (Radbaz: 1479-1573) wrote that the plaintiff is the true mother and that a subtle hint to this effect is found in the fact that the king, in repeating the statements of the women, slightly alters the defendant’s words “my son is the living one” (בני החי, v. 22a) to “this is my son, the living one” (זה בני החי, v. 23a) ¹⁷.

The commentator Moses Alshekh (sixteenth century) wrote that the plaintiff is shown to be the true mother by the fact that she speaks to the king, whereas the defendant, being a liar, is embarrassed to speak to the king and speaks only to the plaintiff (v. 22a). Although the plaintiff then speaks back to the defendant (v. 22aβ), this is only to prove that she can look her rival in the eye as well. Alshekh added that the defendant proves she is a liar by saying “and your son is the dead one” (ובנך המת, v. 22a). According to her position that no switch occurred, it would be irrelevant for her case that the other woman’s son is the dead one ¹⁸.

Saul Zalewski identified the following features of the story as hints that the plaintiff is the true mother. First, both the plaintiff and the true

¹³ L.H. FELDMAN, “Josephus’ Portrait of Solomon”, *HUCA* 66 (1995) 103-167, here 112, 115-119, 164; RENDSBURG, “Guilty Party”, 539-540; C. BEGG, “The Judgment of Solomon according to Josephus”, *TZ* 62 (2006) 452-461, esp. 452-453, 456-457; M. AVIOZ, “King Solomon in Josephus’ Writings”, *Writing and Rewriting History in Ancient Israel and Near Eastern Cultures* (ed. I. KALIMI) (Wiesbaden 2020) 211-222, here 215-216.

¹⁴ Comment on v. 22, at <https://mgketer.org/10/3> (Hebrew).

¹⁵ Comments on vv. 17 and 22, at <https://alhatorah.org> (Hebrew).

¹⁶ See STERNBERG, *Poetics*, 168.

¹⁷ Responsum 1059 (3:634), at <https://www.sefaria.org> (Hebrew). See also David Altschuler (eighteenth century), Metzudat David commentary on v. 25, at <https://alhatorah.org> (Hebrew); Y. KIEL, *1 Kings* (Daat Mikra; Jerusalem 1989) 60-61 (Hebrew).

¹⁸ Comments on vv. 17-21 and 27, at <https://alhatorah.org> (Hebrew).

mother begin their speeches with the same expression that roughly means “please, sir” (בִּי אֲדֹנָי, vv. 17, 26). Second, the plaintiff speaks to the king submissively, calling herself his “servant” (אֲמָתְךָ, v. 20). Third, the plaintiff, with one exception (v. 22aβ), refers to her rival in the third person (vv. 17, 18, 19), as does the true mother (v. 26a), whereas the defendant and the false mother both refer to their rival in the second person (vv. 22aα, 26b) (cf. Alshekh). Fourth, the plaintiff’s account is logical and reasonable (cf. Abrabanel) ¹⁹.

Perhaps the most developed case in favor of the plaintiff is brought by Moshe Garsiel, whose three main arguments are as follows. First, the plaintiff has polite and well-structured speech, in contrast to the defendant who does not address the king and offers no account of the events, leading one to suspect that she fears her tongue will trip her up (cf. Abrabanel, Alshekh, and Zalewski). Second, the defendant is called “the other woman” (הָאִשָּׁה הָאַחֶרֶת, v. 22), a term which is derogatory, as in English, and implies illegitimacy in its other biblical occurrences (Judg 11,2; 1 Chr 2,26). Third, the true mother speaks politely with “please, sir” (בִּי אֲדֹנָי, v. 26a) like the plaintiff (v. 17), while the liar speaks crassly (v. 26b), like the defendant (v. 22aα) (cf. Zalewski) ²⁰.

2. Defendant

It seems many readers would agree that the plaintiff’s account is legally weak ²¹. By her own admission, she woke up with a dead boy whom she herself assumed at first was hers (v. 21a); and she makes an extraordinary allegation that she admits is not supported by observation or evidence (v. 20), but only by her subjective assessment that the dead child was not the one she had borne (v. 21b). It is remarkable, then, that the defendant found no advocates among the story’s readers until the eighteenth century CE.

As far as I am aware, the defendant’s first advocate was Hayyim Azulai (Hida: 1704-1806). His argument was developed by the commentator Meir Weissner (Malbim: 1809-1879), with whom it is usually associated, and Weissner in turn was followed by Shimon Sofer (1850-1944) and

¹⁹ S. ZALEWSKI, *Solomon’s Ascension to the Throne*. Studies in the Books of Kings and Chronicles (Jerusalem 1981) 206 (Hebrew). For the first point, see further LASINE, “Riddle”, 80 n. 9; HADAD, “Solomon’s Judgment”, 109. For the last point, see further G. RACHAMAN – Y. RACHAMAN, “Solomon’s Judgment: Response to the Article of Elia and Gila Leibowitz”, *Beit Mikra* 38 (1992) 91-94 (Hebrew).

²⁰ GARSIEL, “Revealing and Concealing”, *passim*; IDEM, “Two Harlot Mothers”, *passim*.

²¹ STERNBERG, *Poetics*, 168: “worthless”.

others. These readers noted that the defendant begins her speech, in both the direct narrative and in the king's recap, with "my son is the living one" (בני החי, vv. 22aα, 23a), whereas the plaintiff opens her counter-response with "your son is the dead one" (בנך המת, vv. 22aβ, 23b). This shows that the plaintiff's first priority is that her rival not have a living son, which contrasts with what we would expect from the true mother but accords well with the false mother's parting statement, "He won't be mine or yours. Cut!" (גם לי גם לך לא יהיה גורו) v. 26b)²².

Weisser conceded that there is an alternative explanation for the plaintiff's beginning with the dead son: she might wish to begin with what she experienced directly, namely (if her account is true) that the dead son is not her own, and only then move on to what she inferred, namely that the living son is her own. However, Weisser rejected this possibility, arguing that this reason would suffice only for the arrangement of her original testimony, not for her subsequent response²³. Another alternative explanation was proposed hundreds of years earlier by Ibn Kaspi, who argued that the plaintiff begins her response with what upsets her the most, which is that a dead boy was fraudulently put in her bosom: *כי נפשה מרה לה על הזיוף והנבלה שנעשה בו בהשכיבו אותו בחיקה*²⁴. But one could respond that the abduction and alienation of her son should upset her more. Others have dismissed the argument by noting that the arrangement of the women's response and counter-response is an instance of chiasmic structure, which is common in the Hebrew Bible²⁵. But they have not explained why the author chose to use this structure precisely where it makes one of the disputants look bad and did not use it, for example, in the larger transition

²² Azulai: Chomat Anakh commentary on v. 23, at <https://www.sefaria.org> (Hebrew); Weisser: commentary on vv. 22-26, at <https://alhatorah.org> (Hebrew); Sofer: Shir Maon commentary on v. 23 in the Haftarah of the Miketz portion in Genesis, at <https://responsa.co.il> (Hebrew); G. LEIBOWITZ – E. LEIBOWITZ, "Solomon's Judgment", *Beit Mikra* 35 (1990) 242-244 (Hebrew), here 244 (who, mirror-imaging the argument of David ibn Zimra above, argue that the king's addition of "this is" [זה] to the defendant's words hints that he noticed the difference and its significance); A. HENMAN, "Solomon's Judgment and the Possession Principle", *Megadim* 30 (1999) 111-113 (Hebrew), here 112; Y. EISENBERG, "Solomon's Judgment", *Da'at: Judaic and Humanistic Studies* n.d., n.p., online: <https://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/rishonim/mishpat-2.htm> (Hebrew); Z. ZEVIT, "1 Kings", *Jewish Study Bible* (eds. A. BERLIN – M.Z. BRETTLER) (2d ed.; Oxford 2014) 653-709, here 664; NIMNI, "Solomon's Judgment", 71-72.

²³ Comments on vv. 22-24.

²⁴ Comment on v. 22, at <https://mgketer.org/10/3> (Hebrew).

²⁵ E.Y. WIESENBERG, "Solomon's Judgment", *Niv Hamidrashia* 9-10 (1973) 39-50, here 41 n. 28; ZALEWSKI, *Solomon's Ascension*, 206; Y.M. ROSENBERG, "For Judgment Is God's: Solomon's Judgment — a Biblical Rashomon", *Limudim* 12 (2015) n.p., online: https://www.daat.ac.il/daat/ktav_et/maamar.asp?ktavet=2&id=1694 (Hebrew); MAZOR, "Revealed and Concealed", n.p.

from the narration of what the women said to the king and his summary of their testimony within this very story (vv. 22-23).

Efraim Wiesenbergs argues that the plaintiff's account proves she is lying. She claims to know that her rival's son died because she smothered him (v. 19b), but she could not possibly know this because, according to her own account, she was sleeping at the time (v. 20a)²⁶. Gila and Elia Leibowitz take the argument further, saying that the plaintiff's claim betrays her guilt: she could only know the cause of death if the dead boy was really her son and she smothered him²⁷. This argument was preempted much earlier by the commentator David Kimhi (c. 1160-1235) who noted that the claim would be a reasonable supposition if the boy had not been sick²⁸. (Even if the boy were the plaintiff's and she woke up with him under her and dead, the cause of death would still be only a reasonable supposition.) I would add that the premise of the argument is wrong. The plaintiff does not say that she was asleep when her rival lay on her son. Moreover, she distinguishes between two points in time: her rival killed her own son "at night" (לילה, v. 19) and later switched the boys "in the middle of the night" (בתוך הלילה, v. 20)²⁹. The plaintiff's testimony does not preclude the possibility that she witnessed her rival lying on her son dangerously, or even that she witnessed the boy's death. The plaintiff does say, however, that she was asleep when the switch occurred (v. 20a), and some scholars suggest a problem with her credibility on this point³⁰. But this, too, is a reasonable inference from her claimed subsequent experience³¹.

Yehuda Eisenberg maintains that the plaintiff literally says that she found her own son dead: "Then I woke up in the morning to nurse my

²⁶ WIESENBERG, "Solomon's Judgment", 41-42. See also B. DON YECHYA, "Solomon's Judgment as a Model for Revealing Factual Truth", *Da'at: Judaic and Humanistic Studies* (2012-2013) n.p., online: <https://www.daat.ac.il/mishpat-ivri/skirot/102-2.htm> (Hebrew).

²⁷ LEIBOWITZ – LEIBOWITZ, "Solomon's Judgment", 243. See also E. VAN WOLDE, "Who Guides Whom? Embeddedness and Perspective in Biblical Hebrew and in 1 Kings 3:16-28", *JBL* 114 (1995) 623-642, here 629-630; ROSENBERG, "Judgment Is God's", n.p.

²⁸ Comment on v. 19, at <https://mgketer.org/10/3>.

²⁹ See RACHAMAN – RACHAMAN, "Solomon's Judgment", 92.

³⁰ J.T. WALSH, "The Characterization of Solomon in First Kings 1-5", *CBQ* 57 (1995) 471-493, here 479; M. COGAN, *I Kings*. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AB 10; New York 2001) 195; NIMNI, "Solomon's Judgment", 65-66; C.E. ANDERSON, "The Sword of Solomon: The Subversive Underbelly of Solomon's Judgment of the Two Prostitutes", *Partners with God*. Theological and Critical Readings of the Bible in Honor of Marvin A. Sweeney (eds. S.L. BIRDSOONG – S. FROLOV) (Claremont Studies in Hebrew Bible and Septuagint 2; Claremont, CA 2017) 73-81, here 75-76.

³¹ WIESENBERG, "Solomon's Judgment", 42; GARSIEL, "Revealing and Concealing", 238; IDEM, "Two Harlot Mothers", 42-43; R. WESTBROOK, "Law in Kings", *The Books of Kings*. Sources, Composition, Historiography and Reception (eds. A. LEMAIRE – B. HALPERN) (VTSup 129; Leiden 2010) 445-466, here 447.

son, but he was dead!” (וַאֲקָם בְּבֹקֶר לְהִינִיק אֶת בְּנִי וְהָנָה מֵת) (v. 21a). He argues that this is a slip of the tongue that the plaintiff recognizes, and her anxiety over this is betrayed by her awkward repetition of the words “in the morning” (בְּבֹקֶר) immediately afterwards (v. 21b)³². Of course, one could respond that the plaintiff is candidly describing the events as she experienced them, and at that point she experienced finding a dead boy with her whom she believed was her son, realizing only later that she had been mistaken in that belief³³.

Stuart Lasine notes that if the defendant is the true mother, then the speeches in the story form a neat, alternating pattern: 1. plaintiff (vv. 17-21); 2. defendant (v. 22a); 3. plaintiff (v. 22b); 4. defendant (through the king: v. 23a); 5. plaintiff (through the king: v. 23b); 6. defendant (true mother: v. 24a); 7. plaintiff (false mother: v. 24b)³⁴. Eliezer Hadad adds another structural argument: the framing “Then the --- woman said [...] while this one said” (וְתֹאמַר הָאִשָּׁה [...] וְזֹאת אָמְרָת) is used to introduce the defendant’s and the plaintiff’s words respectively in the first half of the story (v. 22) and then to introduce the true mother’s and the false mother’s words respectively in the second half (v. 24). This indicates that the defendant is the true mother and the plaintiff is the false mother³⁵. While neither Lasine nor Hadad regard their arguments as decisive, Gary Rendsburg accepts both arguments, adding to the second by noting that the introduction to the false mother’s statement “while this one said” (וְזֹאת אָמְרָת) is used not only by the narrator to introduce the plaintiff’s statement but also by the king (v. 23b)³⁶. Garsiel claims in response to Rendsburg that the speech introduced by the king with the words וְזֹאת אָמְרָת is not necessarily that of the plaintiff, because the king may be changing the internal order of the speeches in his summary³⁷.

Eliyahu Nimni, in addition to accepting Weisser’s and Eisenberg’s points, makes the following novel arguments in favor of the defendant. First, the plaintiff’s account contains implausible elements: it requires us to believe that she herself thought she found her son dead, and the other woman really did find her son dead earlier, but neither of them called for help or cried out. Second, the plaintiff incriminates herself by saying that

³² EISENBERG, “Solomon’s Judgment”, n.p. See also NIMNI, “Solomon’s Judgment”, 68-69.

³³ See GARSIEL, “Revealing and Concealing”, 238; IDEM, “Two Harlot Mothers”, 43.

³⁴ LASINE, “Riddle”, 80 n. 9.

³⁵ HADAD, “Solomon’s Judgment”, 110.

³⁶ RENDSBURG, “Guilty Party”, 536-539.

³⁷ GARSIEL, “Revealing and Concealing”, 243 n. 36; IDEM, “Two Harlot Mothers”, 48 n. 41.

the other woman placed the dead boy “in my bosom” (בְּחִיקִי, v. 20b). She can only have meant to say that the other woman placed the dead boy where the other boy had been. Thus, the plaintiff contradicts her earlier statement that the boy was taken “from beside me” (מֵאֵצֶלִי, v. 20a) and unwittingly admits that she slept with her son in her bosom, which is dangerous. This indicates that it was she who smothered her own son and then tried to pin the blame on the other woman. Third, the other woman would never have placed the stolen boy in her own bosom after having just killed her own son in that way³⁸.

The natural response to Nimni's first argument is that we cannot know what is or is not a plausible human response to such a tragic event. One could respond to his second argument by saying that it is not necessarily true that sleeping with a child in one's bosom was considered more dangerous than sleeping with a child beside oneself. And the third argument seems extremely weak: the plaintiff does not say that the other woman went back to sleep after the switch; moreover, the other woman would not necessarily have had any other place to put the boy.

3. *Indeterminable*

Meir Sternberg does not discuss the alleged clues in favor of each of the women, stating only that the story is designed in such a way that “we never find out for sure” who the true mother is. Noting the existence of this design feature in the modern detective story, Sternberg asserts that it focuses the reader's attention on the inquirer, Solomon, and on his success in determining the truth where others, including the reader, would fail³⁹.

Hadad argues that the story deliberately plants clues on each side of the question in order to bait us into working on a problem that we cannot solve. He agrees with Sternberg that the purpose is to highlight the great wisdom of Solomon⁴⁰. Yehoshua Rosenberg goes further, comparing our story to *Rashomon*, an influential Japanese film which depicts a crime through the contradictory testimonies of witnesses. Rosenberg agrees with Hadad that our story uses opposing clues in order to make the question indeterminable, but he believes that the intended message is legal and epistemological: that a judge cannot always reveal the factual truth⁴¹.

³⁸ NIMNI, “Solomon's Judgment”, 68-72. For the distinction between “beside” and “bosom”, see already Weisser, comment on v. 20.

³⁹ STERNBERG, *Poetics*, 169. See also VAN WOLDE, “Who Guides Whom”, 638; REINHARTZ, *Why Ask*, 109; MAZOR, “Revealed and Concealed”, n.p.

⁴⁰ HADAD, “Solomon's Judgment”, esp. 103, 110.

⁴¹ ROSENBERG, “Judgment Is God's”, n.p.

III. ATTEMPTED SOLUTION

I must begin this section by confessing that, when I began to study the story seriously, my own intuition was similar to the positions of Hadad and Rosenberg, whose articles I had not yet read. If careful and intelligent readers of the story had taken both sides of the question without any special knowledge of the Bible or the ancient Near East being brought into play, it must be that the author intended for the riddle to be unsolvable. Nevertheless, I now think, generally, that an author who went to the trouble of setting up such an elaborate riddle would also set up a solution, and specifically, that there is a compelling solution to this riddle.

1. *Difficulties*

To be sure, there are obstacles that make it difficult for any solution intended by the author to be available to us, millennia after the story's composition. First, there is relevant knowledge that its original audience would have had but we do not. Were there certain conventions of lawsuits, or tropes in literary depictions of lawsuits, that the story played on? Did mothers usually sleep with their babies in their bosom, beside them on the same bed, or elsewhere? To what extent were people aware of the phenomenon that we call SIDS — that babies can die in their sleep for no discernable reason? Second, the riddle, which is indisputably subtle in the extreme, is transmitted in writing. Thus, the slightest mistake or "correction" in the transmission process could ruin it.

The story also seems to leave important questions open deliberately, as if to dissuade us from pressing it too hard. Who has custody of the living boy during the trial? We know only that he is in the vicinity of the courtroom (vv. 24-25). Some readers assume that the defendant has him, which is why the plaintiff needs to sue⁴². But perhaps he was taken by a bailiff, or each woman is grasping an arm and a leg or one side of a bassinet. It is also conceivable that the two women are civilly cooperating and taking turns caring for the boy pending the trial's outcome; after all, they still live together (v. 17). And where is the dead boy? I imagine buried and gone, but some have his corpse available for cutting in two alongside

⁴² David ibn Zimra, responsum 1059; WIESENBERG, "Solomon's Judgment", 42; HENMAN, "Solomon's Judgment", *passim*; WESTBROOK, "Law", 449; DON YECHIYA, "Solomon's Judgment", n.p.; ROSENBERG, "Judgment Is God's", n.p.; NIMNI, "Solomon's Judgment", 64. These readers invoke the possession principle (המוציא מחברו עליו) (הראיה), saying that according to proper legal procedure the burden of proof would be on the plaintiff.

the living boy⁴³. How much time passed between the second birth and the death of the one boy, and then between his death and the trial? Some readers opine that the case could potentially have been decided by determining the age of the living boy through physical examination, indicating that they assume that the trial takes place very soon after the births⁴⁴. But this is not actually stated.

2. *Clues*

And yet, one detail that the story does provide concerns the precise location of the boys on the night of the death. According to the plaintiff's account, she (A) went to sleep with her son "beside her" (אצלי, v. 20a) and (B) woke up with a boy in her "bosom" (בחיך) without noticing anything amiss about that (vv. 20b-21). Either Claim A or Claim B must be false⁴⁵. Thus, while I am not convinced by Nimni's aforementioned argument that the distinction between "beside" and "bosom" in the plaintiff's account incriminates her as a negligent mother who would smother her own child, I do see it as revealing a falsehood in her account.

A more astonishing aspect of the plaintiff's testimony is what it does *not* contain⁴⁶. The end of her account is: "Then I woke up in the morning to nurse my son, and he was dead! But then I examined him in the morning, and he was not my son whom I had borne!" (v. 21). How does she not continue with: "And then I examined the boy in this woman's bosom to see if he was mine, and he was!" or "And then I tried to examine the boy in this woman's bosom, but she wouldn't let me, though as soon as I heard his cries I knew he was mine!" or "... but she wouldn't let me, so I demand to see him now!"? If your child was taken from you, wouldn't

⁴³ Lucianic manuscripts of the Septuagint in v. 25 (for more directly relevant textual variants, see below); Josephus, *Ant.* 8.31. In this scenario, the king's ruse can be that of a true division of the "property" between the two women, in accordance with Exod 21,35. See also 2 Sam 19,30; J.A. MONTGOMERY – H.S. GEHMAN, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings* (ICC; Edinburgh 1951) 110; M.J. MULDER, *1 Kings* (trans. J. VRIEND) (HCOT; Leuven 1998) 158.

⁴⁴ Joseph Kara (before c. 1060-1070), commentary on v. 18, at <https://www.mgketer.org/mikra/10/3>; Abrabanel, commentary on v. 18, at <https://alhatorah.org>; S. LEVIN, "The Judgment of Solomon: Legal and Medical", *Judaism* 32 (1983) 463-465; NIMNI, "Solomon's Judgment", 64.

⁴⁵ Presumably it is Claim A, because it helps her case while Claim B hurts it. Claim A prevents the question: "How could she have taken your son from your bosom without waking you up?", while Claim B invites the stronger corresponding question: "How could she have placed her son in your bosom without waking you up, and why would she have done so when placing him beside you, where your son had been, would have lowered her chances of getting caught red-handed or after the fact?".

⁴⁶ See NIMNI, "Solomon's Judgment", 66.

you want to find him? And, if her purpose in standing before the king is to be declared the mother of the living boy, wouldn't her subjective but positive assessment that *he is* the one she had borne help her case more than the subjective and negative assessment that another boy *was not* the one she had borne? But she says nothing about the living boy: she does not demand to examine him; she does not, come to think of it, even demand custody of him. We cannot say that she was cut off before she could get to this part, since she later gets the chance to counter-respond to her rival (v. 22aβ) and to continue arguing with her (v. 22b) ⁴⁷.

Indeed, the plaintiff's counter-response, which prioritizes the assertion that the dead boy is her rival's (as already observed by Weisser et al.), is an apt summary of her account, which is designed through and through not to establish the claim that the living boy is hers, but to establish the claim that the dead boy she woke up with is not hers. Incidentally, that claim, as worded in her account, was not a lie or even a mistake: the boy she found in her bosom in the morning really was not the boy she had borne. The latter was a living, breathing child; the former was a corpse.

A falsehood, an astonishing omission, and a suspiciously worded summary in the plaintiff's case would not be legally sufficient for a judge to decide that she is the false mother. But, for the reader, who knows that one of the two women has revealed herself as the false mother, they are sufficient to decide that the plaintiff was that woman, especially since her account is extraordinary and requires our faith in her. Thus, it seems to me that there is a solution to the meta-riddle in the story of Solomon's Judgment: the defendant is the true mother.

IV. TEXTUAL CRITICISM

We turn now from the Masoretic Text to other textual witnesses. While no part of the story is extant in any Judean Desert scroll, the Septuagint in this section of Kings displays a profile very different from that

⁴⁷ Remarkably, in the retelling of the story by Josephus, where the plaintiff is identified as the true mother, all these suspicious features of the plaintiff's account are altered: she noticed her own child's absence immediately upon waking up, and thus the distinction between "beside" and "bosom" loses its significance; she positively identified the dead child as the other woman's, virtually ensuring that the living child is her own; she did demand the living child from the other woman but was denied; and she is now explicitly asking the king to remedy this (*Ant.* 8.29). Westbrook ("Law", 447), who also sees the plaintiff as the true mother, writes that she "recognized her own child alive in her companion's arms", a claim that is not made in the biblical text or even in Josephus.

of the Masoretic Text, which makes for some significant variants. The most relevant of these for our purposes are as follows ⁴⁸.

In verse 18, most witnesses to the Septuagint and to the Peshitta omit the first בבית, “in the house”, while the Vulgate omits the second בבית. In verse 21, some witnesses to the Septuagint omit the first or second הנה, literally “behold”. Since all these variants remove awkward repetitions from the plaintiff’s account, it would be fair to say that they have the effect of making it somewhat smoother.

In verse 20, most witnesses to the Septuagint omit ואמתך ישנה, “while your servant was asleep”. Some scholars have asserted that this omission strengthens the plaintiff’s case by removing the problem of her being asleep during the events she describes ⁴⁹. One could ask how much it really strengthens her case, since we have to assume anyway that she means that the switch happened when she was asleep. Otherwise, why would she not have stopped it, and how could she have thought initially that the boy she woke up with was her own (v. 21)?

The most significant variants for our purposes are actually in verses 22 and 23. In v. 22, most witnesses to the Septuagint omit the words וזאת אמרת לא כי בנך המת ובני החי, “while this one said, ‘No, your son is the dead one and my son is the living one’”. In v. 23, these witnesses then have the words בני החי, “my son is the living one”, precede בנך המת, “your son is the dead one”, in the king’s summary of both women’s cases. These two variants combined have the effect of removing what has been considered one of the strongest arguments that the defendant is the true mother: that of Weisser et al.

Alternatively, the Hexaplaric recension (attested in Codex Alexandrinus and minuscule x [247: Vatican Library Urbin. Gr. 1] of the Septuagint, the Armenian Version, and the Syro-Hexapla) and the Vulgate invert the statements in v. 22, having the defendant say לא כי בנך המת ובני החי, “No, your son is the dead one and my son is the living one”, and the plaintiff counter-respond with לא כי בני החי ובנך המת, “No, my son is the living one and your son is the dead one”. In v. 23, these witnesses agree with the Masoretic Text. In this reading, the tables are turned: the aforementioned argument favors the plaintiff being the true mother instead of the defendant.

⁴⁸ Sources: A.E. BROOKE – N. MCLEAN – H.S.J. THACKERAY (eds.), *The Old Testament in Greek* (Cambridge 1930) vol. 2, part 2, 216; R. WEBER – R. GRYSON (eds.), *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem* (5th ed.; Stuttgart 2007; tagged Accordance version), n.p.; T.M. LAW, *Origenes Orientalis*. The Preservation of Origen’s Hexapla in the Syrohexapla of 3 Kingdoms (DSI 2; Göttingen 2011) 51-53.

⁴⁹ S. LASINE, “Solomon, Daniel, and the Detective Story: The Social Functions of a Literary Genre”, *HAR* 11 (1987) 247-266, here 250 n. 10; IDEM, “Riddle”, 67; GARSIEL, “Revealing and Concealing”, 238 n. 26; IDEM, “Two Harlot Mothers”, 42-43 n. 31.

Thus, there are several readings in the Septuagint and other versions that lead the reader to favor the plaintiff more than the corresponding Masoretic readings, or that have been understood as doing so. There are no versional readings that do the opposite. The simplest explanation for this that I can see is that there was a tendency among the scribes in the Septuagintal and affiliated traditions to read the story as Josephus did, with the understanding that the plaintiff is the true mother, and they removed or “corrected” elements that did not accord with this understanding. If the solution proposed above is correct, they got it wrong: their understanding was the opposite of what the author intended.

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SUMMARY

In the biblical story of Solomon’s Judgment (1 Kgs 3,16-28), after the question of how the king can determine which woman is the true mother, a further question arises: Which woman turned out to be the true mother — the plaintiff or the defendant? This study attempts to do four things: first, confirm that the latter question is a deliberate feature of the story and is thus a meta-riddle that illustrates the biblical authors’ highly sophisticated management of ambiguity; second, present the interpretation history pertaining to this riddle; third, solve the riddle; and fourth, show the effect of textual criticism on it.

JEHU'S RITUAL POLLUTION OF SAMARIA'S TEMPLE COMPARED WITH LACHISH'S "GATE SHRINE" TOILET

I. INTRODUCTION

How does one make what is holy, unholy? How does something change from pure into impure? This article explores ancient ways that desecrations were accomplished and are revealed now in archaeological excavations. I shall examine how ritual pollution was performed biblically¹, whereby sacred spaces were defiled by toilet associations. Desecration is directly opposed to consecration, and conceptions of the sacred and pure are inextricably linked together. Just as purity contrasts with impurity, so also perceptions of the holy and unholy are also intrinsically antithetical, although still defined by their relationship to each other (see, e.g., Lev 10,10)². Impurity opposes society's holiness and the two spheres must be kept separate, so that impure persons are "barred from entering sacred precincts"³. Consequently, a community's concepts of holiness and purity often correspond to its hygienic norms, as can be observed in ancient Near Eastern religions⁴. In essence, holiness and impurity are at opposite poles, and societies have prescribed ideals of what is holy and how it is kept pure⁵. The Hebrew root קדש for "holy" essentially signifies "separation" or "restriction", in the sense that the sacred must be kept separate from the common and impure (cf. Latin *sacer*)⁶. In some biblical verses, the unclean, as throughout human cultures, is associated with bodily discharges like human feces (see, e.g., Deut 23,13-15; Ezek 4,12-15)⁷. Such

I wish to express personal thanks to Professors Yosef Garfinkel, Israel Knohl, Ed Greenstein, and Yitzhaq Feder for their comments and suggestions when writing this article.

¹ I indicate the Masoretic Text's versification (MT) in biblical references, unless otherwise specified.

² Douglas notes that often in human cultures there is "an overlap between nonreligious ideas of contagion and rules of holiness": M. DOUGLAS, *Implicit Meanings*. Essays in Anthropology (London 1975) 48.

³ J. Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford 2000) 22. In the biblical purity system, the sacred is never impure, but the common can be either pure or impure. See further J. MILGROM, *Leviticus 1–16* (AB 3; New York 1991) 732.

⁴ K. VAN DER TOORN, *Sin and Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia*. A Comparative Study (SSN 22; Assen 1985) 27-37.

⁵ M. DOUGLAS, *Purity and Danger*. An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo (London 1966) 7.

⁶ DOUGLAS, *Purity*, 8.

⁷ But note the absence of references to feces in Leviticus and Numbers.

biblical standards of impurity relate to the anthropological principle that societal or religious ideals derive from the community's notions of "physical completeness", which requires "the wholeness of the body" to be free from the impure or unholy as a "perfect container"⁸. In Douglas' perspective, society often views itself metaphorically as a human body that knows and measures its health against ideal standards of purity⁹. Douglas' body analogy serves as a useful symbol that helps us to imagine pollution or defilement as the placement of something where it should be removed and kept "outside the body", as seen in modern hygiene's avoidance of "dirt" as "matter out of place"¹⁰. Although I understand the inherent limitations in Douglas' use of the human body as a metaphor related to conceptions of impurity¹¹, the symbolism still helps an anthropologist to categorize human hygienic practices. If we adopt her comparison of a community to the human body, then discharges and unhealthy issues from the community must logically be kept away from the group, just as we dispose of those unclean things that come from the body. In short, within many cultures, the human body becomes a microcosm of a societal ideal, so as to be a self-reflecting "powerful image" with "external boundaries" for that society's concept of the holy and the hygienic rules used to maintain purity standards¹².

For the clean to be converted to the unclean, society must see the reversal of status, from holy to unholy, or pure to impure, in a dramatic and shocking change made publicly evident. Hence, society's idealized human body can be traumatically attacked, with portions or body parts radically altered from pure to impure, when the sacred is profaned or contaminated. Ritual pollution occurs within the "interplay of form and surrounding formlessness", or within society's concepts of the holy and the unholy¹³, so that the danger of pollution arises from the incongruity between societal ideals of the sacred and non-sacred. Thus, if society wishes to attack its own religious concepts from within, or internally (e.g., religious reforms), then those in such cultic revolutions utilize overt acts of ritual pollution to

⁸ DOUGLAS, *Purity*, 51-52.

⁹ DOUGLAS, *Purity*, 115.

¹⁰ DOUGLAS, *Implicit Meanings*, 50-51; DOUGLAS, *Purity*, 35.

¹¹ E.g., T. KAZEN, "Purity/Impurity", *Vocabulary for the Study of Religion* (eds. R. SEGAL – K. VON STUCKRAD) (Leiden 2015) 3:166-170, here 167; Y. FEDER, "Contagion and Cognition: Bodily Experience and the Conceptualization of Pollution (tum'ah) in the Hebrew Bible", *JNES* 72 (2013) 151-167, here 154; T.M. LEMOS, "Where There Is Dirt, Is There System? Revisiting Biblical Purity Constructions", *JSOT* 37 (2013) 265-294, here 266-268.

¹² DOUGLAS, *Purity*, 114.

¹³ DOUGLAS, *Purity*, 104.

attack its community's established norms for defining the sacred. Therefore, similar or analogous desecrations occur in the reforms of both Hezekiah and Josiah to show that societal changes cause cultic defilement. For example, iconoclasts destroy idols so as to display the lack of existential coherence between the sacred ideal of the deity and the object of observed reality, as seen on the idol's defaced visage and features¹⁴. Likewise, the danger of ritual pollution for the sacred and pure arises from the incongruity of reality in human experience with the societal ideals of the holy and hygienic. Clearly one does not expect to find, for example, a toilet placed within the holy of holies of Solomon's temple! Incompatible changes, such as a temple becoming a latrine, are radically contrary to the past, assumed nature of the holy. Thus, such paradoxical reversals represent a fundamental key to understanding the mindset and underlying intention inherent within ritual pollutions.

Religious reforms usually attack societal standards of the sacred by public performances that indicate obvious signs of *contradiction*, which contrast with the ideals of holiness or the associated attributes of the divine. Moreover, "purity is the enemy of change", since purity, as a societal or religious standard, pursues its ideal(s) by *rejection* of certain agreed-upon "mundane" concepts in an effort to keep the pure separated from the impure¹⁵. Thus, societal revolution and religious reform confound "sacredness with uncleanness" and mix the holy with distinct, recognizable "contagions" that religious and societal ideals have already defined as such when creating their "rules of avoidance"¹⁶. Therefore, ritual pollution aims to guide society by a palpable change to the recognition of a public "contradiction", or an observed reversal to its established ideals of the holy and pure¹⁷. In other words, public profanations undermine the sacred and pure "by paradox and contradiction"¹⁸. Correspondingly, even acts of pollution become rituals which obviously intend negative results. This is to say, ceremonial defilement accords, in some sense, with anthropological definitions of ritual as "performance, planned or improvised, that effects a transition"¹⁹. In other words, the way that the holy is desecrated becomes a religious prescription, or ceremonial form, in order to enact

¹⁴ N. MAY, "Iconoclasm and Text Destruction in the Ancient Near East", *Iconoclasm and Text Destruction in the Ancient Near East and Beyond* (ed. N. MAY) (OIS 8; Chicago, IL 2012) 1-32.

¹⁵ DOUGLAS, *Purity*, 161-162.

¹⁶ DOUGLAS, *Purity*, 159.

¹⁷ DOUGLAS, *Purity*, 162.

¹⁸ DOUGLAS, *Purity*, 179.

¹⁹ B.C. ALEXANDER, "Ritual and Current Studies of Ritual: Overview", *Anthropology of Religion. A Handbook* (ed. S.D. GLAZIER) (Westport, CT 1997) 139-160, here 139.

ritual contaminations. Moreover, profanations in biblical reforms under certain kings (e.g., Hezekiah, Josiah, Jehu) certainly evidence idealized ceremonies of defilement, although such notions still have not been developed much within scholarship. Hence, this article examines one such biblical case in comparison with published archaeological studies. In 2 Kgs 10,18-28, Jehu defiled Samaria's Baal temple by converting its sacred grounds into a latrine, so as to indicate pollution by human feces.

The symbolic debasement that a toilet represents to ancient cultures appears obvious. A Neo-Assyrian curse aptly utilizes the motif of a sleeper's bed covered in a dung heap, which exemplifies the negative connotations that feces and latrines had for ancient Near Eastern societies ²⁰. A toilet basically represented impurity to the ancient Near Eastern mindset, defiling ideals of the holy that society shared collectively, especially before later sewage technology. On these grounds, Lemos argues, contrary to Milgrom, that certain biblical contexts do indeed view feces as a source of impurity ²¹. Moving beyond Douglas' scholarship concerning the impurity of excreta ²², Kazen similarly relates impurity to human emotions like disgust, a connotation which feces surely evoked among the ancients, just as it does for modern mindsets ²³. Biblical authors, likewise, sometimes display a disgust at human feces as if it were morally impure, to use Klawans' terminology ²⁴. However, Klawans' bifurcating division of impurity into moral and ritual categories likely represents a false dichotomy for the ancient mindsets reflected in the Hebrew Bible ²⁵. Surely Kazen is correct, nevertheless, to view feces as an impurity through the shared emotional experience of disgust ²⁶. This is to say, feces are an ancient form of impurity by virtue of the visceral emotion of disgust which excreta universally evoke in human perception. Therefore, one need not require the Torah's priestly material to echo such disgust with human excrement ²⁷, since the biblical

²⁰ S. PARPOLA – K. WATANABE, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (SAA 2; Helsinki 1988) 11.

²¹ LEMOS, "Where There Is Dirt", 270-272, 285-287; *contra* MILGROM, *Leviticus 1-16*, 767.

²² DOUGLAS, *Implicit Meanings*, 55.

²³ T. KAZEN, "The Role of Disgust in Priestly Purity Law: Insights from Conceptual Metaphor and Blending Theories", *JLRS* 3 (2014) 62-92, here 64; T. KAZEN, *Emotions in Biblical Law. A Cognitive Science Approach* (Sheffield 2011) 81-84, 93.

²⁴ KLAWANS, *Impurity*, 21-42, 158-162.

²⁵ LEMOS, "Where There Is Dirt", 277-279; KAZEN, *Emotions*, 27. Such criticism applies also to Ginsburskaya's dichotomy of "Physical" and "Sin" impurities, which roughly overlaps with Klawans' conceptual bifurcation. See M. GINSBURSKAYA, "Purity and Impurity in the Hebrew Bible", *Purity. Essays in Bible and Theology* (eds. A.B. LATZ – A. ERMAKOV) (Eugene, OR 2014) 3-29, here 4-6.

²⁶ KAZEN, "Role", 64.

²⁷ *Contra* MILGROM, *Leviticus 1-16*, 767; D. WRIGHT – R. JONES, "Discharge", *ABD* 2:204-207, here 206.

tradition probably left unmentioned ancient impurity conceptions that were tacitly assumed²⁸. In other words, as Deut 23,13-15 indicates, common customs of latrine practice (e.g., earthly burial) would remove the impurity of feces from daily life, just as toilets and sewage systems do in modern times. Moreover, Deut 23,13-15 only mentions human excrement burial with the necessary exodus outside of the holy war camp, which, like the tabernacle and temple, hosted the divine presence (see Deut 23,15). Thus, the uniqueness of Deut 23,13-15's purity standard against feces was not the earthly burial aspect, but actually the external location of excrement outside of the war camp in order to honor the divine presence. Therefore, there would be no need for the Torah's priestly material to attempt to remedy the "permitted" impurity of human defecation²⁹, which was already easily handled by common hygienic practices in ancient cultures like that of Israel. On the other hand, Deut 23,13-15 states that Israel might be defeated in battle if YHWH encounters excrement while walking in the sacred camp. Deut 23,13-15's explicit language describing possible moral consequences from the presence of feces in Israel's camp finds parallel retributive notions in the prevalent biblical doctrine of holy war (see Joshua, etc.). Thus, where one defecates with respect to the war camp might determine the outcome of Israel's battle, just as moral sins like idolatry required the First Temple's conquest and destruction. Hence, Deut 23,13-15, with other passages like Zech 3,3-5, provides explicit biblical evidence that human excreta were considered a moral impurity or a ritual defilement in certain instances, though usually permitted when the customary sanitary practices were followed³⁰.

Saar Ganor's and Igor Kreimerman's discovery of a toilet at Lachish level III's "gate shrine" illustrates a ritual pollution parallel to Jehu's use of a latrine to defile Samaria's Baal temple³¹. Jehu's and Hezekiah's reforms apparently both utilized the same negative stigma of the latrine in their public profanations. In contrast to Kleiman's interpretation of the toilet in Lachish³², the archaeology of Lachish's gate shrine actually demonstrates

²⁸ For discussion of biblical verses which suggest that excrement is impure, see D. WRIGHT, "Unclean and Clean", *ABD* 6:729-741, here 736.

²⁹ I employ the category of permitted impurity in Wright's bifurcation of impurities as either prohibited or allowed. See further WRIGHT, "Unclean and Clean", *ABD* 6:729-741.

³⁰ LEMOS, "Where There Is Dirt", 271, 285-288.

³¹ S. GANOR – I. KREIMERMAN, "An Eighth-Century B.C.E. Gate Shrine at Tel Lachish, Israel", *BASOR* 381 (2019) 211-236.

³² S. KLEIMAN, "The Iron IIB Gate Shrine at Lachish: An Alternative Interpretation", *TA* 47 (2020) 55-64. Ussishkin refutes Kleiman on Lachish's toilet, while Kleiman counters Ussishkin on the cultic nature of Lachish's gateway. Contrary to Kleiman, the stone object was a toilet, but she correctly notes cultic evidence at Lachish's gate. Contrary to Ussishkin, cultic activity occurred in Lachish's gate. Ussishkin states that the toilet probably has a parallel stone

an ancient manner of latrine desecration similar to that of Jehu's pollution in 2 Kgs 10,18-28. Hence, Ganor and Kreimerman claim confirmation of Hezekiah's reform (see 2 Kgs 18,4), a religious movement that went beyond Jerusalem and that provides evidence for a repertoire of polluting destructions which hearken back to Jehu's earlier toilet desecration at Samaria (i.e., Sebastia)³³. Thus, Hezekiah apparently inspired various forms of iconoclastic attacks and defilements that Judah's priestly hegemony and civil leaders correspondingly implemented into society (see 2 Chr 31,1), which included, in the case of Lachish, latrine desecration. Let us first consider Lachish's archaeological manifestation of this type of ritual pollution, then examine a parallel in Jehu's analogous toilet profanation.

II. RITUAL POLLUTION AT LACHISH LEVEL III'S "GATE SHRINE"

Ganor and Kreimerman persuasively argue that Lachish's gate shrine was desecrated by sealed association with a toilet³⁴. Although Kleiman questions Ganor's and Kreimerman's identification of the stone object as a toilet³⁵, she does not present a viable alternative interpretation of the artefact³⁶. Kleiman offers no clear counter-example of a similarly-discovered cultic vessel for use in a religious ritual³⁷. Her primary object for archaeological comparison from Jerusalem actually provides evidence against her thesis.

Kleiman compares Lachish's toilet to a stone object found in the parallel, Iron IIB context of Jerusalem's City of David, Stratum 12³⁸. Among her arguments for the cultic usage in Jerusalem of this similarly-shaped object, Kleiman inadvertently showcases another toilet utilized for analogous profanation at a contemporaneous Judahite city level (i.e. eighth century BCE)³⁹.

object within the gate's opposite Chamber 4010, although he concludes that it was employed with water merely in a secular, public manner. See D. USSISHKIN, "Was a 'Gate Shrine' Built at the Level III Inner City Gate of Lachish? A Response to Ganor and Kreimerman", *BASOR* 385 (2021) 153-170.

³³ GANOR – KREIMERMAN, "Shrine".

³⁴ GANOR – KREIMERMAN, "Shrine".

³⁵ KLEIMAN, "Shrine", 58-60.

³⁶ Kleiman postulates a "cultic ceremony" which possibly "involved the lighting of oil lamps that were stored in a niche and were then placed on the narrow wall", hypothesizing that the "ritual might also have included the pouring of an unknown liquid or other substance inside the stone object": KLEIMAN, "Shrine", 59-60.

³⁷ KLEIMAN, "Shrine", 57-63.

³⁸ KLEIMAN, "Shrine", 59.

³⁹ A. DE GROOT – H. BERNICK-GREENBERG, "Stratigraphy", *Excavations at the City of David, 1978-1985, Directed by Yigal Shiloh, Volume VIIA. Area E. Stratigraphy and*

Although Kleiman presents all of the surrounding excavated materials testifying to a cultic setting for the City of David's object, she actually provides evidence indicating that the toilet is desecrating a sacred area ⁴⁰. Therefore, I draw a different conclusion from Kleiman about the object's cultic context. In contrast, I interpret the object to be another toilet symbolically placed in ritual pollution.

The City of David toilet was not used for defecation, but instead for the desecration of its sacred precinct. Although the privy sits alone, with apparently no feces evidently below it, yet it rests upon and among a large quantity of cultic pottery purposefully collected together with "an abundance of charcoal and bones" ⁴¹. The excavators write: "It is unclear to us whether this is evidence of a cesspit, and, if so, how the toilet seat was mounted without any solid support below" ⁴². Thus, the archaeologists conclude that the toilet was properly mounted at its excavated location for its use as a latrine ⁴³. Hence, the toilet's final resting location seems out of place and apparently was positioned secondarily within its foreign, cultic context ⁴⁴. Ganor and Kreimerman found this same type of contradictory locus for the Lachish toilet ⁴⁵. However, the Jerusalem toilet is more carefully placed in its customary resting position for typical latrine usage ⁴⁶, while the Lachish privy might have been deliberately put on its side ⁴⁷. As Kleiman notes ⁴⁸, the many ceramic vessels found with (i.e., under) and just west of the Jerusalem object likely indicate cultic usage ⁴⁹, since even the oil lamps are positioned near to the toilet ⁵⁰, as if left abandoned from

Architecture (eds. A. DE GROOT – H. BERNICK-GREENBERG) (Qedem 53; Jerusalem 2012) 9-138, here 98-100. De Groot dates Stratum 12 essentially to the entirety of the eighth century, terminating with Sennacherib's siege in 701 BCE. See also A. DE GROOT, "Discussion", *Excavations at the City of David* (Qedem 53) 141-184, here 154-156.

⁴⁰ KLEIMAN, "Shrine", 59.

⁴¹ DE GROOT – BERNICK-GREENBERG, "Stratigraphy", 99-100.

⁴² DE GROOT – BERNICK-GREENBERG, "Stratigraphy", 99.

⁴³ DE GROOT – BERNICK-GREENBERG, "Stratigraphy", 99.

⁴⁴ KLEIMAN, "Shrine", 58-60.

⁴⁵ GANOR – KREIMERMAN, "Shrine", 220-224.

⁴⁶ DE GROOT – BERNICK-GREENBERG, "Stratigraphy", 99-100.

⁴⁷ GANOR – KREIMERMAN, "Shrine", 220-224. The toilet was found positioned on its side, which USSISHKIN, "Response", 169, attributes to a later construction's disturbance by a robbers' pit (i.e. later robbing of earlier material).

⁴⁸ KLEIMAN, "Shrine", 59.

⁴⁹ A. DE GROOT – H. BERNICK-GREENBERG, "The Pottery of Strata 12-10 (Iron Age IIB)", *Excavations at the City of David, 1978-1985. Directed by Yigal Shiloh. Volume VII B. Area E: The Finds* (Qedem 54; Jerusalem 2012) 57-198, here 192-198, figures 4.56-4.59; see esp. figures 4.56: 12, 15-21. KLEIMAN, "Shrine", 59, notes particularly two strainer jugs, pictured at 4.59: 2-3.

⁵⁰ DE GROOT – BERNICK-GREENBERG, "Pottery", 192-198. Compare the oil lamps found at Lachish's gate shrine. See GANOR – KREIMERMAN, "Shrine", 225-227.

ceremonial practices. Although Kleiman's speculation on certain vessels and their ritualistic employment may prove incorrect ⁵¹, I essentially follow her arguments for religious activity with cultic ceramics in the City of David Stratum 12's context of the stone object. While Kleiman was incorrectly motivated to reinterpret Lachish's toilet as cultic, she probably detects religious activity missed by the City of David excavators, such as Stratum 12's "standing stone" near the toilet ⁵². The *Massebah*'s proximity to the toilet likely indicates another case of a latrine desecrating a sacred space, since the niche's vessels were discovered just west of the toilet ⁵³ and close to the *Massebah*'s raised bench ⁵⁴.

In contrast to Jerusalem's sacred room, Kleiman misinterprets much of the archaeology of Lachish's gate shrine. For example, she claims that the altar in Lachish's shrine represents a portion of the walls ⁵⁵, though Garfinkel convincingly shows the altar to have been plastered into its adjoining wall by a separate construction stage from the door's plastered sealing ⁵⁶. The eight-horned altar (i.e., unified double, four-horned altars) plainly displays a reduced height in its constructed connection to the wall, indicating a different purpose for its utilization ⁵⁷. This altar appears perfectly angled and positioned directly opposite a clear-cut niche incised in the wall, undoubtedly indicating its cultic nature and the altar's sacred space ⁵⁸. The original archaeologists correctly observe the religious nature of the niche surrounded with plastered walls, facing a plastered altar with damaged altar horns ⁵⁹. Garfinkel, likewise, argues contrary to Kleiman that the stones of the altar horns were targeted by hammer blows before being recycled as a new wall ⁶⁰. For Garfinkel, the plastered wall construction indicates a cultic reform's changes of a sacred room and its altar into a latrine décor before the door's sealing ⁶¹. The toilet's presence at Lachish's shrine, in any case, rightly strikes the excavators as foreign to a clearly cultic setting. Therefore, the stone object was deliberately placed out of context within Lachish's gate shrine as a toilet desecration.

⁵¹ KLEIMAN, "Shrine", 59-60.

⁵² KLEIMAN, "Shrine", 59. The excavators interpret the *Massebah* as a door "jamb". See DE GROOT – BERNICK-GREENBERG, "Stratigraphy", 99-100, photo 111.

⁵³ DE GROOT – BERNICK-GREENBERG, "Pottery", 192-198.

⁵⁴ DE GROOT – BERNICK-GREENBERG, "Stratigraphy", 99-100.

⁵⁵ KLEIMAN, "Shrine", 56-60.

⁵⁶ Y. GARFINKEL, "The Cultic Reform in the Gate Shrine of Lachish", *Strata* 38 (2020) 31-44.

⁵⁷ GANOR – KREIMERMAN, "Shrine", 218-219; GARFINKEL, "Reform", 37.

⁵⁸ GANOR – KREIMERMAN, "Shrine", 212-219.

⁵⁹ GANOR – KREIMERMAN, "Shrine", 212-219.

⁶⁰ GARFINKEL, "Reform", 39.

⁶¹ GARFINKEL, "Reform", 42.

Kleiman's interpretation of both Jerusalem's and Lachish's toilets encounters its greatest obstacle from the imprecise nature of Kleiman's alternative suggestion of cultic usage, begging the very question of doubting the original excavators' interpretations of both stone objects. Thus, Kleiman describes purification rituals probably occurring in the context of Lachish's gate shrine, especially in light of the presence of the "hole-mouth jar" located at the front of the gate shrine's room (i.e. "chamber three")⁶². Yet, even such claims would lend themselves readily to a toilet desecration scenario, since one profanes the pure or hallowed, but not the unclean. Kleiman's postulation is imprecise and disagrees with archaeological comparison of Lachish's object with the City of David's parallel artefact in Stratum 12. Therefore, in these cases from Lachish and Jerusalem, there is little reason to question or abandon the toilet interpretations of these objects by the original excavators⁶³.

Clear and nearly-contemporaneous examples of toilets exist, especially in Jerusalem's excavations⁶⁴, although they are not completely published⁶⁵. Thus, sufficient evidence for the general shape, purpose, and utility of Lachish's stone object, which Ganor and Kreimerman correctly label as a "toilet seat"⁶⁶, exists in Judah's Iron II contexts generally, with even international archaeological parallels available for comparisons⁶⁷. Despite such abundant archaeological parallels from contemporaneous contexts in Levantine excavations, Kleiman offers no viable alternative interpretation to Ganor's and Kreimerman's toilet. Instead, Kleiman postulates cultic usage of liquid vessels found in nearby contexts, although she never adequately explains how the ceremony with such stone objects was performed, nor how the shape of the stone item facilitated cultic utilization. Moreover, why build such elaborate stone objects to pour liquid libations merely on the ground, especially with no evidence of collection basins, as are frequently found at city gate cultic installations⁶⁸? Rather, I suggest that often water was collected within at least some of the city gate basins listed by Blomquist⁶⁹, which was obviously the liquid utilized in cultic purification

⁶² GANOR – KREIMERMAN, "Shrine", 225; KLEIMAN, "Shrine", 60.

⁶³ DE GROOT – BERNICK-GREENBERG, "Stratigraphy"; GANOR – KREIMERMAN, "Shrine".

⁶⁴ DE GROOT, "Discussion", 172-173.

⁶⁵ E.g., R. CHAPMAN, "A Stone Seat Found in Jerusalem in 1925", *PEQ* 124 (1992) 4-8; J. CAHILL – K. REINHARD – D. TARLER – P. WARNOCK, "It Had to Happen. Scientists Examine Remains of Ancient Bathroom", *BAR* 17 (1991) 64-69.

⁶⁶ GANOR – KREIMERMAN, "Shrine", 220-224.

⁶⁷ DE GROOT, "Discussion", 172-173.

⁶⁸ T. BLOMQUIST, *Gates and Gods*. Cult in the City Gate of Iron Age Palestine (Stockholm 1999) 47-131.

⁶⁹ BLOMQUIST, *Gates*, 118, assigns such basins under the category of "Equipment for Libations".

or ablution rituals at city gate complexes and sacred spaces (e.g., near *Masseboth*)⁷⁰. Yet, toilets intended for desecration appear appropriately placed within such foreign, holy contexts, since such water was simply utilized for purification ceremonies or ablutions (e.g. washing hands and other body parts). In other words, impure toilets pollute such sacred precincts, as in the aforementioned examples from Lachish and Jerusalem, which were once known for their purification rites as holy places.

It stretches credulity to posit that such misunderstood toilet objects are so precisely cut in stone that they mislead archaeologists into concluding that they represent privy shapes. The perforated keyhole cap of these toilet artefacts would cause any liquid poured on top to empty below onto the ground, which contradicts normal practice for a libation-collecting altar, or a sacrificial platform for blood. In Gen 28,18, for example, Jacob pours oil over his *Massebah*'s "head" and not on the ground. In contrast to collecting any liquid, the Lachish toilet's keyhole is shaped in such a manner so as to strongly suggest that a male would be comfortably facilitated when sitting for defecation. This is to say, the keyhole perforation on the object's saddle does not suggest libation or liquid pouring, which would not need such a peculiarly shaped keyhole if it were attempting merely to collect as much spilled liquid as possible on the ground. Rather, the saddle-shaped top naturally allows human males to sit comfortably atop it for latrine usage. Yet, Kleiman postulates a ritual that might "have included the pouring of an unknown liquid or other substance inside the stone object"⁷¹. But, in the case of Lachish's shrine, the toilet was not found sitting upright or properly, but abnormally on its side, so that Kleiman's cultic ritual of pouring liquids on top of it would seem unnatural⁷². Likewise, the City of David's toilet context also negates Kleiman's hypothesis, as a liquid pouring ceremony into the toilet's keyhole would have covered a ground littered with bones, charcoal, and a substantial layer of pottery⁷³. What is the religious significance of anointing a bare ground covering such excavated materials by pouring through the object's keyhole? Rather,

⁷⁰ BLOMQUIST, *Gates*, 118. Avner lists excavation sites with basins near *Masseboth*, some for blood collections, but others for water ablutions. See U. AVNER, "Egyptian Timna – Reconsidered", *Unearthing the Wilderness. Studies on the History and Archaeology of the Negev and Edom in the Iron Age* (ed. J.M. TEBES) (ANESSup 45; Leuven 2014) 103-162, here 119.

⁷¹ KLEIMAN, "Shrine", 60.

⁷² USSISHKIN, "Response", 155-169, notes an important possibility for why no feces were found in the gate shrine's hole for the toilet, since the privy probably fell into a robbers' pit during the destructive building of a domestic unit subsequent to Sennacherib's siege. Thus, the toilet's feces were possibly removed during later construction, with a destructive pit intruding into Level III's stratum at the gate shrine.

⁷³ DE GROOT – BERNICK-GREENBERG, "Stratigraphy", 99.

one would expect simply a cleared surface ground with much evidence of ceremonial liquid absorption. In contrast, the excavators found only "friable earth" and express puzzlement at the lack of any evidence of a cesspit under the toilet, since they do not state any doubt of the niche's latrine usage ⁷⁴. Thus, it is certainly easier to assume here, as in the case of the Lachish shrine, a ritually placed toilet sitting properly and upright atop a once sacred area, still retaining evidence of cultic offerings below this privy. Hence, the Jerusalem context still preserves the remnants of the religious activity before desecration, but it was ceremoniously defiled with a toilet placed uprightly atop the profaned niche's once holy precinct. Thus, Kleiman has inadvertently introduced comparative archaeological evidence that contradicts her argument against Ganor and Kreimerman.

In archaeology, usually the simplest and most straightforward explanation is correct, especially in these aforementioned cases of not finding alternative hypotheses that can be precisely defined ⁷⁵. Moreover, Kleiman so loosely defines the cultic rituals performed with said toilets, that her hypothesis appears as almost a tacit admission that she cannot give concrete definitions of the religious purposes for the objects. The natural assumption for both Lachish's gate shrine and the City of David's cultic room is that some water purification rituals were practiced, but beyond this inference not much more can be definitely known about the cultic customs. The nature and practice of the ritualistic behavior from the material culture preserved, as specifically in these cases from Lachish and Jerusalem, do not allow greater amplification beyond the fact that we have dislocated toilets in contexts quite dramatically improper to their apparently original functions. In summary, the material culture's locus evidence probably indicates water purification practices and cultic observances reflecting a religious reverence, or a perceived sacred nature surrounding these niche areas, in which we illogically find "toilets" quite shockingly at odds with their archaeological contexts.

Kleiman, in search of comparative cultic evidence from archaeology, reaches across Lachish's street to the opposite gate's chamber on the northern side ⁷⁶, excavated by Ussishkin ⁷⁷. Kleiman essentially follows, with some qualifications, the argumentation of Liraz's hypothesis for the religious status of Chamber 4010, which is directly opposite to Lachish's gate shrine ⁷⁸.

⁷⁴ DE GROOT – BERNICK-GREENBERG, "Stratigraphy", 99.

⁷⁵ KLEIMAN, "Shrine"; USSISHKIN, "Response".

⁷⁶ KLEIMAN, "Shrine", 60-63.

⁷⁷ D. USSISHKIN, *The Renewed Archaeological Excavation at Lachish (1973-1994)* (MSIA 22; Tel Aviv 2004) 2:637-644.

⁷⁸ KLEIMAN, "Shrine", 60-63; E. LIRAZ, "A Second Cult Room at the Lachish Gate?" *NEA* 81 (2018) 269-275.

The cultic nature of Lachish's northeastern city gate's chamber, if true, would mirror the architectural character of Kuntillet 'Ajrud's parallel entryway chambers ⁷⁹. Archaeology would have yet another example from Lachish of religion at the gates. Similarly, if Chamber 4010 were correspondingly used for cultic ritual with Lachish's southeastern chamber, then the suggestion in 2 Kgs 23,8 that multiple city gate shrines existed in Josiah's Jerusalem would find archaeological comparison. Indeed, such was probably the case at Lachish Level III before Sennacherib's siege.

Kleiman confirms sacred precinct comparisons of Lachish's gate shrine with Chamber 4010 ⁸⁰, suggesting cultic evidence from Chamber 4010's large pithos for water purification rituals ⁸¹, corresponding to Ganor's and Kreimerman's "holemouth jar" ⁸², as well as Kuntillet 'Ajrud's similar pithos for purification water ⁸³. Although one must be cautious with exposed remains from an older excavation ⁸⁴, I, with Kleiman, see related cultic activity in both Lachish's gate shrine and Chamber 4010 ⁸⁵, such as water vessels for ritual purifications. Two shrines, or gateway "high places" (cf. 2 Kgs 23,8), at Lachish's entrance would correspond to other archaeological examples of multiple cultic gateway installations ⁸⁶, such as at Kuntillet 'Ajrud's entrance complex ⁸⁷ or Tel Dan's city gate religious activities ⁸⁸. Thus, Kleiman makes valid observations of cultic evidence at Lachish's Chamber 4010, such as the city gate's water vessels ⁸⁹. However, Lachish's hegemony only sealed Lachish's gate shrine with certainty, as the archaeology of Chamber 4010 remains less clear ⁹⁰. After the gate shrine's toilet profanation, Sennacherib's attack later discovered Lachish's desecration method, as indicated apparently by the nature of the plastered entryway's destroyed remains ⁹¹. I observe, like Kleiman, the presence of cultic purifications in sacred precincts located at city gates, a sacred

⁷⁹ Z. MESHEL, *Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*. An Iron Age II Religious Site on the Judah-Sinai Border (Jerusalem 2012) 22-30.

⁸⁰ KLEIMAN, "Shrine", 60-63.

⁸¹ KLEIMAN, "Shrine", 62, does not specify the liquid nor the ritual usage for the gate vessels.

⁸² GANOR – KREIMERMAN, "Shrine", 226.

⁸³ KLEIMAN, "Shrine", 62.

⁸⁴ KLEIMAN, "Shrine", 60.

⁸⁵ KLEIMAN, "Shrine", 60-63. Ussishkin notes possible water usage, which surely relates to cultic activity. See USSISHKIN, *Lachish*, 2:641; USSISHKIN, "Response", 155-169.

⁸⁶ BLOMQUIST, *Gates*.

⁸⁷ BLOMQUIST, *Gates*, 94-97.

⁸⁸ BLOMQUIST, *Gates*, 57-69.

⁸⁹ KLEIMAN, "Shrine", 60-63.

⁹⁰ USSISHKIN, "Response" 17, notes later disturbances of Level III's remains, such as at the entrance to Chamber 4010.

⁹¹ GANOR – KREIMERMAN, "Shrine", 212-232.

presence that was shockingly desecrated with Lachish's sealed toilet (*contra* Ussishkin) ⁹².

Lachish's gate shrine indicates, generally speaking, the sanctifying presence of ritualistic purifications. Archaeology indicates a typical paradigm from excavations of cultic activity surrounding city gate complexes ⁹³, so as to confirm Ganor's and Kreimerman's gate shrine. Paradoxically, as indicated in the cases of Lachish and the City of David, archaeology reveals two apparent cases of pollution by toilet desecration. Yet, such desecration is not logical without first defining the sacred nature archaeologically, or an observed ritual purification concern, which is indeed evident at excavated city gate complexes ⁹⁴. Why, one must ask, pollute a city gate chamber if it was not considered holy? Lachish's gate shrine, thus, is appropriately named, as it is desecrated by a toilet.

Lachish's northeastern and southeastern city gate chambers in Level III both provide comparative evidence of purification equipment and cultic activity at gateway high place installations. With regard to Lachish's southeastern gate shrine, it clearly testifies to ritual pollution by latrine association, having a parallel from the roughly contemporary desecrating toilet excavated at the City of David, Stratum 12. Therefore, Lachish's city gate complex (i.e., Chamber 4010 and its southern counterpart) was desecrated by Ganor's and Kreimerman's toilet, but further conclusions await a re-excavation of Ussishkin's original findings ⁹⁵. I would develop Ussishkin's recent interpretation further and link Chamber 4010's parallel, perforated square block with the gate shrine's toilet as both being desecrating toilets placed within cultic rooms ⁹⁶.

⁹² Ussishkin misses various construction clues in the gate shrine, such as the unique niche architecture, which is not seen in Lachish's gateway elsewhere, so as to indicate cultic activity in the shrine's room. He also does not address a relevant archaeological reality: whereas toilets were not usually placed in city gates in antiquity, city entryways often had cultic installations. USSISHKIN, "Response", in summary, provides more evidence of water storage and usage for the gateway's cultic purification processes beyond Kleiman's article.

⁹³ D. FRESE, *The City Gate in Ancient Israel and Her Neighbors*. The Form, Function, and Symbolism of the Civic Forum in the Southern Levant (CHANE 108; Leiden 2020) 160-168.

⁹⁴ FRESE, *City Gate*, 160-168; AVNER, "Timna", 119. BLOMQUIST, *Gates*, 118, describes "Equipment for Libations" very generally.

⁹⁵ Note Ussishkin's description: "dressed chalk block with a deep depression": USSISHKIN, *Lachish*, 2:640.

⁹⁶ Ussishkin's suggestion of a secular use of the square block with water requires more examination, especially if one assumes with him that this stone object parallels the gate shrine's toilet. If these two stone objects are shown to have parallel functions as toilets, then one must consider the fact that Chamber 4010's block was found placed on the floor *in situ* (i.e., not over a cesspit, as a toilet customarily would be). See further USSISHKIN,

III. JEHU'S POLLUTION OF SAMARIA'S BAAL TEMPLE IN 2 KINGS 10,18-28

Although often categorized as iconoclasm⁹⁷, desecrations of cultic objects and structures frequently occur in warfare and societal upheaval. For example, Lev 26,30 and Ezek 6,1-7 display explicit, iconoclastic destructions associated with corpses, which illustrate ancient sentiments undergirding attacks aimed to "kill" deities along with their religiously affiliated materials and worshippers (e.g., Jer 8,1-2)⁹⁸. Hence, one murdered the deity by destroying its image, but often iconoclasts would also "kill" the god's cultic paraphernalia and devotees by various ceremonial contaminations, or, simply put, ritual pollutions. Similarly, Jehu "eliminated Baal from Israel" (see 2 Kgs 10,28) by means of his slaughter of Baal's priests with Baal's cultic objects (e.g., temple and *Masseboth*), but also, most dramatically, by profaning Baal's temple with toilet desecration (see 10,18-28). Much of the narrative in 2 Kings 10 describes Jehu's religious *coup d'état*, involving various significant acts of Jehu's ascent to power and his military exploits aimed at destroying the Samaritan hegemony of Ahab's dynasty. Jehu's activities fulfill, at least for 2 Kgs 10,9-11's Deuteronomist, Elijah's prophecies in 1 Kgs 21,20-29 and represent YHWH's "divine will" against Ahab's family and its Baal devotion. Yet, since Jehu's divine retribution was predicted along with those brought by Hazeel and Elisha in 1 Kgs 19,15-18, it was only natural that Jehu's religious confrontation with the deity Baal would occur at the city of Samaria. Moreover, Samaria had become the "focal point for the Baal cult" in northern Israel (see 1 Kgs 16,31-33)⁹⁹. Robker links 1 Kgs 16,31-33 to 2 Kgs 10,18-28, remarking that "the establishment of the Baal cult prepares the way for Jehu's dismantling of it"¹⁰⁰. Thus, 2 Kgs 10,17 and 10,28 summarize Jehu's extermination of Israelite Baalism, which 10,1-28 elaborates more fully, giving the details of how Jehu religiously "wiped out" all adherents and cultic objects devoted to Samaria's Baal, along with Baal's temple containing the deity's standing stone¹⁰¹. The ritualistic character of Jehu's slaughter, with obvious foreshadowing in Jehu's "clever

"Response", 155-169. If Ussishkin is correct to claim such parallel use, then Chamber 4010's block and its placement would also indicate a symbolic pollution of a toilet sitting on the floor of the sacred room (e.g., the opposite chamber's gate shrine).

⁹⁷ MAY, "Iconoclasm", 19.

⁹⁸ MAY, "Iconoclasm", 19.

⁹⁹ I.W. PROVAN, *1 and 2 Kings* (NIBC; Peabody, MA 1995) 215.

¹⁰⁰ J.M. ROBKER, *The Jehu Revolution. A Royal Tradition of the Northern Kingdom and Its Ramifications* (BZAW 435; Göttingen 2012) 139.

¹⁰¹ W. BRUEGGEMANN, *1 & 2 Kings* (Macon, GA 2000) 397-400.

play on words" in 10,19's term "sacrifice" ¹⁰², becomes evident in Jehu's calculated invitation of the Baal priests which leads to their ceremonial massacre. Quite ritualistically, Jehu deliberately desecrates the Samaritan temple by murdering the priests in their cultic vestments, as 10,25's verb שלך ("to cast out") connotes the act of corpse exposure in open, unburied desecration ¹⁰³. Thus, Jehu's murder of religious officiants and leaving their corpses unburied within and surrounding Baal's temple, as well as at other areas considered to be the city's hallowed grounds (e.g., entryway gate installations), could be interpreted as a deliberate ritual pollution. The very act of killing people on sacred precincts connotes desecration, since contact with the slain corpses would contaminate something holy as well as any living witnesses of the event (e.g., Num 19,11-22; 31,19) ¹⁰⁴, a pollution which Feder said might be connected with the fear of ghosts ¹⁰⁵. Hence, 2 Kgs 10,25's defiling actions of exposure probably involved unmentioned desecrations throughout Samaria's city gate(s) and walls, which often represent municipal locations for state-sponsored cultic activities ¹⁰⁶. 2 Kgs 10,25 states that Jehu's guards "went as far as the city (עיר) of Baal's temple", which has puzzled scholars. The textual problem, however, finds a solution in the fact that the city's area surrounding the Baal temple, including the municipal zones reaching as far as the city gateway installations, were also littered by cadavers, extending beyond just one distinct part of the Baal temple's sacred precincts ¹⁰⁷. Moreover, one might expect that Jehu would only slaughter and expose corpses on hallowed grounds, as Josiah had done at altars (see 2 Kgs 23,15-20). Yet, Jehu's eighty soldiers scatter the cadavers all over the city of Samaria, which also implies the municipal areas surrounding the entryway's gate shrines. Samaria's various cultic installations were probably religiously devoted to

¹⁰² T.R. HOBBS, *2 Kings* (WBC 13; Waco, TX 1985) 129. As Hobbs notes, the word "sacrifice" is used for Josiah's "slaughter" of apostates (see 1 Kgs 13,2; 2 Kgs 23,20). Long suggests another "pun" in Jehu's language of "service" in 2 Kgs 10,18 with 10,19's verb for Jehu's destruction. See B. LONG, *2 Kings* (FOTL 10; Grand Rapids, MI 1991) 139.

¹⁰³ M. COGAN – H. TADMOR, *II Kings* (AB 11; New York 1988) 116.

¹⁰⁴ Compare the protective sanctity surrounding those grasping altar horns expressed in the Torah's law of asylum, which protects those fleeing vengeance (see 1 Kgs 1,50; 2,28; Exod 21,14).

¹⁰⁵ Y. FEDER, "Death, Afterlife and Corpse Pollution: The Meaning of the Expression *ṭāmē' la-nepes'*", VT 69 (2019) 408-434.

¹⁰⁶ BLOMQUIST, *Gates*.

¹⁰⁷ COGAN – TADMOR, *Kings*, 116. *Contra* A. KLOSTERMANN, *Die Bücher Samuelis und der Könige* (Nördlingen 1887) 426. HOBBS, *Kings*, 130, notes that Klostermann's emendation to the temple's inner room is "unlikely", favoring, in contrast, the term's etymology to signify a walled city, or a city with defensive enclosures. See F. FRICK, *The City in Ancient Israel* (SBLDS 36; Missoula, MT 1977) 30.

other deities besides Baal, which also must have had their own standing stones in Baal's temple or elsewhere in Samaria (see 10,26). However, 10,18-28 concerns only Baal, or rather, Jehu versus Baal at Samaria. Like Jehu's attack against Samaria's Baal, Marduk also boasts of choking Elam's city gates with slain corpses in religious warfare with Elam's deities, moving beyond Elam's temple complexes into the rest of the city ¹⁰⁸.

2 Kgs 10,18-28 demonstrates a natural progression of religious warfare actions by Jehu, whose military performs the general corpse desecration of the city's sacred spaces (see 10,25), and then subsequently completes their destructive activity with an attack against Samaria's Baal temple in 10,26-28. Historically, interpreters and translations of 10,18-28 have missed the logical flow of thought in the narrative account of Jehu's military and its movements around the city and then back to the Baal temple for its complete desecration. Moreover, 10,26 describes *Masseboth* generally, with 10,27-28 then indicating Baal's standing stone specifically targeted and subsequently demolished along with Baal's temple. Thus, Jehu desecrated Samaria's various sacred precincts, particularly the Baal temple and the city gate shrine(s), always remaining within the city's boundaries. Quite clearly, contrary to Yigael Yadin, it is not necessary to posit that Jehu's entourage ventured outside Samaria to another separate city with different cultic installation(s) ¹⁰⁹. In other words, Jehu's defilements and demolitions precisely targeted Ahab's capital city and had specific limits defined by Samaria's sacred precincts and its fortified walls with city gates.

There is no reason to think that Jehu's entourage left Samaria's city perimeters, nor is it necessary to emend MT's Hebrew towards the *Vetus Latina* here ¹¹⁰. MT reads more concisely than even LXX 4 Kgdms 10,18-28, being so sparse as to provoke later scribes or translators to add details. LXX 4 Kgdms 10,25-28's translation probably reflects the Greek tradition's attempts to correct the apparent discrepancies of syntactical and grammatical agreements throughout 10,25-28, thereby improving the narrative logic and flow of thought. This is most likely the case for 10,26-27, especially in regard to the differences in number, changing from singular stele to plural steles within 10,26-27, which is exactly the opposite of

¹⁰⁸ B. FOSTER, *Before the Muses*. An Anthology of Akkadian Literature (Bethesda, MD 2005) 389.

¹⁰⁹ Yadin postulated the existence of a nearby Samaritan city that had another Baal temple in 2 Kgs 10,18-28, just as he also argued for 11,18's temple at Ramat Rachel near Jerusalem. See Y. YADIN, "The 'House of Ba'al' of Ahab and Jezebel in Samaria, and that of Athalia in Judah", *Archaeology in the Levant*. FS Kathleen Kenyon (eds. R. MOOREY – P. PARR) (Warminster 1978) 127-135.

¹¹⁰ *Contra* S. MCKENZIE, *1 Kings 16 – 2 Kings 16* (IECOT; Stuttgart 2019) 404-409.

MT's story. Contrary to 4 Kingdoms, MT provides the reader with a clear progression of narrative logic, which runs throughout 10,25-28's account. Moreover, 10,27's twice repeated verb *נָתַץ* ("demolish") emphasizes a destructive finality often overlooked by interpreters¹¹¹, which indicates logical progression from 10,26's narrative details of mere *Masseboth* transfers and their desecration by burning. Thus, the narrator's choice of *נָתַץ*, in contrast to *שָׁבַר* ("break"), also allows for 10,27's alteration of the temple into a public latrine. Furthermore, the demolitions recounted in 10,27 develop the narrative's logical flow of thought beyond the desecration in 10,26 by the burning of the Samaritan temple's standing stones. Quite clearly, the narrator specifies a destructive process, which moves from the selective burning, or ritualistic desecration, of the Baal temple's *Masseboth* (see 10,26) to the temple's total demolition along with Baal's specific standing stone, culminating in the location's final conversion into Jehu's new public toilet (see 10,27). In summary, popular emendation of 2 Kgs 10,18-28 centers around posited "duplications", or later repetitious insertions, which created a text that reads redundantly within 10,25-27's context¹¹². However, if one follows MT's flow of logic, one might discern a progressive method of desecration¹¹³, starting with the Samaritan temple's *Masseboth* removal and their burning, with subsequent demolitions of both the temple and standing stones, so as then in 10,27 to construct a public toilet upon the sacred space.

Later textual traditions, such as LXX, understood clausal appositions within 10,25-27. Yet, such progressive logic would be more appropriate and native to Hebrew poetry, not to historical narrative contexts like 2 Kgs 10,18-28. Moreover, LXX 10,26's change in number from MT Hebrew's plural to the singular "stele of Baal" likely reflects a traditional interpretation of 10,26's feminine singular verbal object suffix "they burned *it*", which required that 10,26's preceding "steles of Baal" be changed to the singular for syntactical agreement with 10,26's subsequent feminine suffix. However, such a grammatical understanding, probably assumed in LXX's textual changes, would require a syntactical relationship of an "anticipative apposition" by pronominal suffix, which, in this instance, would be quite awkward and also unique to Hebrew grammar¹¹⁴. Moreover, if one infers that 10,26's verbal phrase "they burned *it*"

¹¹¹ C. BARTH, "נָתַץ" in *TDOT* 10:108-114, here 109. The verb means to "tear down", "break up", or "demolish".

¹¹² J. MONTGOMERY, *The Books of Kings* (ICC; Edinburgh 1951) 411.

¹¹³ Zevit suggests the possibility of such a desecration process. See Z. ZEVIT, *The Religions of Ancient Israel. A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches* (New York 2001) 260.

¹¹⁴ R.J. WILLIAMS, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax* (ed. J.C. BECKMAN) (Toronto 32010) 29.

anticipates 10,27's Baal *Massebah* as its feminine suffix's reference, then one must assume that only one standing stone is demolished in 10,18-28's story, which ignores 10,26's plural *Masseboth*. Furthermore, such an assumption is unnecessary for MT's narrative in 10,18-28, since MT's tradition mentions other standing stones in 10,26's plural *Masseboth*, instead of indicating that there was merely one for Baal in the Samaritan temple all throughout the story. Rather, 10,27-28 connects to 10,25-26's references to the Samaritan Baal temple, so as to narrow the focus of Jehu's religious warfare to an attack on Baal. This is in contrast, moreover, to Jehu's probable opposition to the other deities apparently also existing in Samaria and its temple(s), which is naturally suggested to the reader by 10,26's plural *Masseboth*. As to why only "aniconic representations" of Baal are mentioned in 10,18-28's story (i.e., *Masseboth*)¹¹⁵, as opposed to any idols or wooden *Asherahs*, one can only speculate beyond the limits set by 10,26-27's clear textual evidence. Having said this, however, 10,18-28's concise narrative probably limits itself quite deliberately to only pertinent cultic paraphernalia relating to Baal, which were apparently *Masseboth* in Baal's case in the Samaria of Jehu's time¹¹⁶. This inference might be justified in light of 10,28's final summary of the story as one primarily concerned with Jehu's annihilation of Baal. In other words, 10,18-28's narrative explicitly focuses only upon religious forms (i.e., *Masseboth*) pertinent to Baal's Samaritan worship, so that there would be no need to mention possible wooden *Asherahs* or other deities' idols that might surround the story's details. Nevertheless, as Mettinger indicates, Israelite cities, just as in Jehu's Samaria, probably honored many deities with *Masseboth*, even simultaneously alongside aniconic stele homages to YHWH during the "biblical" Iron ages¹¹⁷.

2 Kgs 10,25-27's context of religious warfare would suggest total annihilation of the sacred materials associated with Baal in multiple ways, and not simply a selective desecration of merely one object in the temple (i.e., Baal's singular standing stone). Moreover, if one posits that the feminine singular suffix of 10,26's verbal clause "they burned it" refers to the *Massebah* in 10,27, then this would imply that other standing stones in 10,26 were not part of Jehu's destruction. However, such a selective destruction runs counter to 10,27-28's indication that the whole sacred space was subject to demolition, with the latrine constructed afterward, indicating thereby Jehu's performance of total religious warfare upon the

¹¹⁵ ZEVIT, *Religions*, 261.

¹¹⁶ T. METTINGER, *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in its Ancient Near Eastern Context* (CB 42; Stockholm 1995) 143-168.

¹¹⁷ METTINGER, *Graven Image*, 143-168.

hallowed ground of Samaria's temple. Therefore, I prefer Gesenius' syntactical solution, which posits that 10,26's verbal clause "they burned it" indicates a feminine singular suffix utilized in a pluralistic sense ¹¹⁸, in that the verbal object suffix refers back to the plural *Masseboth* of Baal's temple previously mentioned. In summary, one should simply read 10,25-27's narrative progressively and not as a series of clausal appositions, which naturally would lead to textual emendations of apparent duplications. Thus, one must understand the narrative to describe a desecration process in 10,25-26 ¹¹⁹, with 10,27's description of final demolitions, along with the subsequent construction of new latrines. Furthermore, 10,27-28 progresses to a narrowed-down focus upon Jehu's religious warfare against Baal and Samaria's Baalism. In other words, 10,26's general notion of ritually burning temple standing stones, probably for other deities besides Baal as well, becomes narrowed down to Baal's cultic paraphernalia quite deliberately and specifically in 10,27-28. LXX 4 Kingdoms, on the other hand, misses such a narrative progression to a narrower focus upon Samaria's Baalism in 10,27-28. Essentially, just as modern scholarship misses the narrative's logical progression in 10,25's ritual slaughter with the casting of corpses across the area of Samaria's city walls, so also some bible versions have misunderstood the narrative's flow of thought throughout 10,26-28 as well.

The meaning of 2 Kgs 10,27's *hapax legomenon* מַחְרָא has produced little to no debate among scholars, but a general consensus advocates the latrine connotation. One need not appeal to 4 Kingdoms' rendition to establish a meaning connected to bodily waste, as the root חֲרָא or חֲרִי is attested in 2 Kgs 6,25 to indicate dung (i.e., doves' droppings) ¹²⁰. Therefore, based merely upon MT's Hebrew (10,27's Kethiv), one easily establishes a fecal connotation for 10,27's public toilet context. The Old Greek rendition λυτρών ("latrine" or "privy") ¹²¹ in 10,27 provides even greater support for the meaning of "toilet" in MT's Kethiv reading, with MT's Qere variant merely giving the same meaning ¹²², but representing its euphemistic alternative ¹²³. Such euphemistic textual variation

¹¹⁸ GKC, 441.

¹¹⁹ ZEVIT, *Religions*, 260.

¹²⁰ MCKENZIE, *Kings*, 408.

¹²¹ LSJ 212, 1067.

¹²² BDB 426, 558; CHALOT 187. HALOT 2:559 gives a generic meaning of "withdrawal".

¹²³ ROBKER, *Revolution*, 33. For a similar view, see GRAY, *Kings*, 562. Otto argues that the Kethiv is more vulgar than the Qere and, thus, is more original. See S. OTTO, *Jehu, Elia und Elisa*. Die Erzählung von der Jehu-Revolution und die Komposition der Elia-, Elisa-Erzählungen (BWANT 152; Stuttgart 2001) 40 n. 46.

occurs elsewhere among MT “Kethib-Qere” notations, as in the case of 2 Kgs 10,27, which Robert Gordis records with similar cases in his “Guide against Obscenity” list (e.g., 2 Kgs 18,27; Isa 36,12; etc.)¹²⁴. There is no real debate on the meaning of the Kethiv’s “latrine” among Hebrew lexicons. Some would claim that merely a “public dump” is what is suggested¹²⁵, but the notion of toilet desecration is known biblically (see Ezra 6,11; Dan 2,5; 3,29)¹²⁶. Moreover, lexicographers usually stress specific connotations of human waste in 2 Kgs 10,27’s מִחֶרֶץ¹²⁷. Hence, a general idea of “rubbish landfill” seems to miss the Kethiv’s original meaning¹²⁸, especially in light of its plural number of toilets (cf. Greek’s λυτρώνας “latrines”), which surely suggests multiple public latrines. Moreover, 2 Kgs 9,37’s graphic feces language describing Jezebel’s death and the desecration of her corpse foreshadows, narratively speaking, 10,27’s Kethiv “toilet” imagery¹²⁹. In summary, 10,18-28 states quite clearly that Jehu profaned Samaria’s Baal temple with public toilets as the grand finale to his religious warfare against Ahab’s dynasty and, most dramatically, Ahab’s god Baal.

Jehu, as Samaria’s ruler, later allowed public reuse of the city’s structures that his military had previously desecrated, so that he ordered the Baal temple’s defilement by regular latrine usage (see 2 Kgs 10,27). The archaeology of Lachish’s gate shrine clearly indicates that a similar pollution to that of Jehu’s at Samaria happened during Hezekiah’s reform at Lachish, although possibly only in a ceremonial form with no actual feces. Furthermore, excavations at Lachish confirm the physical descriptions of Samaria’s religious city gate architecture, or urban cultic layout, as was typical elsewhere during these times generally¹³⁰. Thus, Jehu’s iconoclastic destruction of Baal worship covered the entire city area of Samaria, including Samaria’s gateway shrine(s). Jehu, with the claim of divine authority, ritualistically destroyed Ahab’s dynastic rule and the religion of the Samaritans connected to Ahab’s house, as 2 Kgs 10,1-28 graphically narrates. Therefore, Jehu’s revolt manifests itself religiously in his iconoclastic desecrations, which internally altered Samaria’s society by

¹²⁴ R. GORDIS, *The Biblical Text in the Making*. A Study of the Kethib-Qere (New York 1971) 86.

¹²⁵ COGAN – TADMOR, *Kings*, 116.

¹²⁶ For the profane sense of גִּלְדָּה associated with 2 Kgs 10,27’s latrine, see HALAT 5:1745; HALOT 5:1928; CHALOT 413.

¹²⁷ HALOT 2:572; HALAT 2:541; CHALOT 191. BDB (351, 564, 1123) gives the meaning of “cesspool”, but notes that the root sense is “dung” (see 2 Kgs 6,25).

¹²⁸ GRAY, *Kings*, 562.

¹²⁹ HOBBS, *Kings*, 130.

¹³⁰ BLOMQUIST, *Gates*.

its public pollutions, just as Hezekiah's reform also did at Lachish with similar defilement by a toilet. Jehu's slaughter of Samaria's priests serves as an analogy for how he "kills" Baal by ritual pollution of Baal's temple (i.e., the latrine defilement in 10,27). Samaria's society would have remembered Jehu's acts of desecration, with the city's public toilet certainly serving as a constant reminder to Samaria's citizens that Jehu had defeated Baal and Ahab's dynastic rule symbolically by pollution¹³¹. Samaria's historical memory of Jehu's latrine desecration was so strong that 2 Kgs 10,18-28 utilizes the story as a dramatic grand finale, so as to demonstrate most shockingly how Jehu had eliminated Baal from Samaria. Like Jehu, YHWH retributively "kills" Israelite idolaters by contaminating their ruined sanctuaries and religious accoutrements with defiling, impure corpses (see Lev 26,30; Ezek 6,1-7). Hence, both YHWH and Jehu avoid metaphor and are quite literal in their iconoclastic methods of desecration. However, those implementing Hezekiah's reform at Lachish's gate shrine might not have been as literally-minded as Jehu in their ritual pollutions, since no human feces or burned human bones were found near the gate shrine's toilet (e.g. Josiah's desecrations in 2 Kgs 23,15-20). Yet, Jehu's profanation by latrine was simply one means of ritual pollution that could possibly have been utilized by a city's hegemony during such times of the biblical historiographers, as is also clear from Lachish's archaeology.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Lachish's gate shrine testifies to ritual pollution by toilet association. Lachish's authorities quarantined off the city gate chamber with a desecration ceremony, thereby publicly profaning the once-sacred precinct before sealing the door of the sanctuary's innermost room. Such pollution protocol, inspired during Hezekiah's reform (e.g., 2 Kgs 18,4), corresponds clearly to Jehu's earlier defilement of Samaria's temple by latrine utilization. While Lachish evidences sealed toilet association, Jehu, in contrast, publicly desecrated the holy area by the daily profanation of a sacred space through the construction of the latrine. Lachish's leaders, on the other hand, sealed the door of their gate shrine with a toilet when they desecrated their city's gate sanctuary¹³². Jehu, however, did not close off the

¹³¹ ROBKER, *Revolution*, 296, surmises that Jehu's conversion of Samaria's temple into a latrine was for the purpose that it "could not be identified as having previously been a temple". However, Jehu's pollutions probably contributed to the opposite effect, with Samaria's society likely providing clues to remind its citizens of the fact that the toilets desecrated the Baal temple.

¹³² GANOR – KREIMERMAN, "Shrine", 212-232.

temple with a defiling privy, but rather allowed all to see the latrine's desacralization process by the stark reality of the public's constant usage. Since Jehu governed the city of Samaria, he was allowed this public administrative option of desecration. Interestingly, Lachish's defilement process by sealed toilet association was only discovered later apparently by Sennacherib's attack, perhaps due to its distinctive theological context within Hezekiah's reform. Unlike Jehu's revolt, Hezekiah's reform, as an internal, societal revival, attempted to thwart syncretistic religion popular at the time in Judah, as at Lachish. Since Lachish's civil leaders needed to counter later public reuse of the shrine, sealed closure after a public exposure of its defiling toilet association presented the best hindrance to further cultic activity in the desecrated chamber. Most probably Lachish's sealed toilet profanation was merely symbolic or ceremonial, as is indicated from the plastered sealing of the room's door ¹³³, and also by the lack of any discovered feces below and immediately surrounding the toilet's find location ¹³⁴. Although it is possible that fecal remains would be found elsewhere in the gate shrine if sought and tested from the soil, it is easiest to assume simply that Lachish's toilet association was merely symbolic, not requiring actual latrine usage ¹³⁵, as was actually the case for Jehu's pollution ¹³⁶. Thus, Jehu, in contrast to Lachish's ruling class that implemented Hezekiah's reforms, was quite literal in his toilet desecration. However, I would suggest an evolution of ritual pollution procedures over a time frame of roughly 140 years, with a later, more developed, manifestation of the desecrating ceremony only now having become evident in Lachish's archaeology. This is to say, Jehu's pollution protocol required actual latrine usage for contamination to occur, while a later, more ritualized, ceremonial form detected at Lachish Level III did not need physical feces for the desecration process to function effectively. Thus, the more developed ceremonial process revealed at Lachish simply

¹³³ GANOR – KREIMERMAN, "Shrine", 216-217.

¹³⁴ GANOR – KREIMERMAN, "Shrine", 223.

¹³⁵ Both Chamber 4010's parallel square block and the gate shrine's toilet apparently had no excreta. The lack of any feces apparently indicates ceremonial placements. Thus, if we can assume with Ussishkin that both perforated blocks are parallel in their original use, then both were toilets placed symbolically to pollute the sacred space.

¹³⁶ GARFINKEL, "Reform", 40, argues that the shrine room was altered into a latrine with cesspit before the door's sealing, but this theory still needs evidence of feces. If Garfinkel is correct to see two stages in the room's plastering, which is likely, then perhaps even the cultic architecture was altered to reflect a latrine décor, with the altar re-utilized in a dividing wall which hides the privy. My symbolic theory also explains such constructions, even if the shrine's room had a cesspit. However, the toilet's awkward resting position suggests a later construction dug a pit and disturbed the privy. See USSISHKIN, "Response", 169.

chose pollution by symbolic toilet association when displaying its latrine desecration. Hezekiah's reform, albeit centralized at Jerusalem's temple, inspired Lachish's civil leaders (see, e.g., 2 Chr 31,1) to seal off their gate's sanctuary from possible reversal of the defilement process and the public's continued cultic reuse. Although Hezekiah's revival was later than Jehu's revolt, the Lachish city leadership still instituted essentially the same desecration method, with probably some sort of verbal or symbolic ceremony which left the toilet within the sealed door of the once-sacred niche. Jehu, being more efficient and practical with Samaria's city space, fulfilled public latrine needs when he defiled Samaria's temple by the area's toilet reusage. Lachish's plaster-sealed doorway may speak of the nature of Hezekiah's reforms as preventative, generally speaking, of syncretistic or pagan worship. Alternatively, Lachish's sealing of the gate shrine might indicate the Judahite trend of cultic centralization at Jerusalem's temple as being emblematic of Hezekiah's theological agenda, generally speaking. However, "cultic centralization" does not comprehensively define Hezekiah's reform as a whole, but merely one aspect of the movement's theological preoccupations¹³⁷. Religiously, Hezekiah's reform looked inward and changed Judahite society everywhere from within. Thus, in this case at Lachish's gate, Judah's citizens were shocked by the use of a public toilet as an act of desecration.

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SUMMARY

Jehu's desecration of Samaria's Baal temple (2 Kgs 10,18-28) finds archaeological comparison recently with the discovery of Lachish Level III's "gate shrine" toilet. Excavations reveal ritual pollution of a gate shrine by the sealing of a toilet inside the chamber during Hezekiah's reform (2 Kgs 18,4). Likewise, Jehu's revolt defiled Samaria's Baal temple by turning the sanctuary into a latrine and ritually desecrating the holy place with human excreta. By the end of the eighth century BCE, ritual pollution by latrine association seems to have altered slightly, with Lachish's "toilet ceremony" developing from Jehu's older practice approximately 140 years earlier.

¹³⁷ GANOR – KREIMERMAN, "Shrine", 230.

ON THE ORIGIN OF THE ARCHDEMON BEELZEBUL/BEELZEBUB ¹

In the synoptic tradition, Jesus was accused of expelling demons by the power of Βεελζεβοῦλ (Mark 3,22-30; Matt 12,22-30; Luke 11,14-23). The intended meaning of this accusation in the Beelzebul controversy of the synoptic tradition is apparent, as these accounts offer at least three additional interpretations of this name: “the ruler of demons” (ὁ ἄρχων τῶν δαιμονίων; Mark 3,21 par.), “Satan” (σατανᾶς; Mark 3,22 par.), and “unclean spirit” (πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον; only in Mark 3,30). However, the original meaning of this name and the origin of this demon are still open questions among scholars. The vexing challenge of any solution is to offer a convincing explanation of why specifically this name was used for a leader of demons in the first-century Palestinian environment, there being no other evidence for such a demon.

In this brief article, I offer additional support for a marginal proposal that connects the meaning of the name with the Aramaic term בעיל דבב / בעיל דבבא meaning “enemy, accuser”. This proposal has not yet found many adherents among scholars. Peggy Day, in her 1988 monograph, explains the lack of support by saying that “the arguments used in its favour by its defenders simply have not been sound” ². I would like to reinforce this proposal, offering additional arguments in defence of this explanation. I suggest interpreting this name in the context of the formation of other archdemons (Satan, Mastema and Belial) in early Jewish demonology. However, we should first briefly review the two main proposals that until now have been most commonly and elaborately defended in academic discussions of this issue.

I. MAIN PROPOSALS IN THE DISCUSSION

Etymologically, the best-supported proposal is a meaning derived from the Ugaritic epithet *zbl* (“prince”), which is also attested as *zbl b^l arṣ* (“prince Baal of the earth / netherworld”) or simply as *zbl b^l* (“prince

¹ This study is a result of the research funded by the Czech Science Foundation, project GA ČR 19-02741S: “The Transmission and Transformation of Ideas in Hellenism, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity”.

² P.L. DAY, *An Adversary in Heaven. šātān in the Hebrew Bible* (HSM 43; Atlanta, GA 1988) 155.

Baal”) ³. Overall, this epithet is attested more than twenty times in the Ugaritic corpus in connection with the gods, Baal, Yam, and Yariḥ ⁴. Many Hebrew Bible scholars have adopted this meaning as the original name of the Canaanite deity of Ekron from 2 Kings 1, which, they argue, was deliberately deformed to **בעל זבוב** (“lord of flies”) ⁵ in the same manner as another well-known substitution of **בשת** (“shame”) for **בעל** (“Baal”) in the personal names of Mephibosheth and Ishboshet ⁶. Similarly, Arvid Tångberg argues that **בעל זבוב** might have originally referred to a specific local Baal (“Fly Baal”) depicted with some kind of fly ornament signifying an apotropaic and healing function, as in the case of the Mesopotamian god Ningizzida, which subsequently shifted into a general designation of the Canaanite deity Baal in the form of **בעל זבול** (“prince Baal”) in Jewish memory ⁷.

The main difficulty with this line of interpretation of the meaning of the name Βεελζεβούλ is the enormous time-span of hundreds of years that separates the Ugaritic texts from the days of Jesus. Besides, there is no evidence for an ongoing cult of Baal in Palestine after the Exile. Some aspects of this cult could have remained popular in the folk religion of the inhabitants of Palestine, as implied in Tångberg’s connection of **בעל זבוב** (“Fly Baal”) with an apotropaic and healing function. Likewise, Manfred Dietrich and Oswald Loretz demonstrate that some Ugaritic texts designate Baal as *bʿl rpu* (“Baal the Healer”), a chthonic deity able to deal with illnesses and also to drive away demons ⁸. It is imaginable that such trait(s) might have been transformed into the idea of the protective demon Beelzebul. Nevertheless, such an argument would be nothing but conjecture without any, even incidental, evidence.

In the second proposal, which is by far the most popular among NT scholars ⁹, the name derives its meaning from the Hebrew **זבול** (“exalted,

³ Cf. W.F. ALBRIGHT, “Zabūl Yam and Thâpiṭ Nahar in the Combat between Baal and the Sea”, *JPOS* 16 (1936) 17-20; M. HELD, “The Root ZBL/SBL in Akkadian, Ugaritic and Biblical Hebrew”, *JAOS* 88 (1968) 90-96; E.C.B. MACLAURIN, “Beelzeboul”, *NovT* 20 (1978) 156-160; M. DIETRICH – O. LORETZ, “Die Baʿal-Titel *bʿl arṣ* und *aliy qrdm*”, *UF* 12 (1980) 391-393.

⁴ For detailed evidence, see HELD, “The Root ZBL/SBL”, 91.

⁵ See also *Baal* μυῖαν in the LXX, and θεὸν μυῖαν in JOSEPHUS, *Ant.* 9.2.1 §19.

⁶ See, e.g., M.J. MULDER, “**בעל**, Baal in the OT”, *TDOT* 2:192-194 (with further references). This substitution, however, is not unanimously accepted by scholars; see S. SCHORCH, “Baal oder Boschet? Ein umstrittenes theophores Element zwischen Religions- und Textgeschichte”, *ZAW* 112 (2000) 598-611.

⁷ A. TÅNGBERG, “A Note on Baʿal Zebūb in 2 Kgs 1.2.3.6.16”, *SJOT* 6 (1992) 293-296.

⁸ M. DIETRICH – O. LORETZ, “Baal *Rpu* in *KTU* 1.108; 1.113 und nach 1.17 VI 25-33”, *UF* 12 (1980) 171-182.

⁹ See, e.g., R. PESCH, *Das Markusevangelium I. Teil. Einleitung und Kommentar zu Kap. 1,1 – 8.26* (HThKNT II; Freiburg ⁴1984) 213; R.A. GUELICH, *Mark 1 – 8:26*

lofty")¹⁰. William Aitken suggests, based on the biblical occurrences of זבול (1 Kgs 8,13; Isa 63,15; Hab 3,11; Ps 49,15) and the rabbinic material, that the preferred meaning is "dwelling of God", in reference to either the temple or heaven¹¹. Lloyd Gaston, working on this topic several decades later, confirmed this interpretation with further evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls, where it clearly refers to the heavenly (holy) dwelling of God¹². Therefore, Gaston translates בעל זבול as "lord of the heaven" and relates it to the Hebrew title בעל שמים (Aramaic: בעלשמין) of Zeus/Jupiter during the Seleucid period¹³. This title for Zeus/Jupiter is most likely encrypted behind the enigmatic שקוץ שמם from the Book of Daniel (Dan 9,27; 11,31; 12,11)¹⁴, which refers to enforced worship of Zeus Olympius in Jerusalem by Antiochus IV¹⁵. In view of the conviction of the Judaism of that time that all pagan gods were merely demons (see, e.g., Ps 95,5 LXX), Gaston concludes that even Zeus Olympius, i.e., בעל שמים / בעלשמין, was conceived as a demon, in fact, the chief of the demons, Satan himself¹⁶. Regarding the early controversies about the origin of the name "Beelzebul" in the Synoptic Gospels, Gaston speculated that the title בעל שמים / בעלשמין for the main rival of YHWH, i.e. Zeus Olympius, may have been associated with the alleged claims of Jesus to be the lord of the temple (i.e., זבול). It may be that Jesus' opponents misunderstood his sayings such as "I tell you, something greater than the temple is here" (Matt 12,6) and thought that his "stretching out his hands against the Zebûl"¹⁷ was an offence against the temple.

(WBC 34A; Grand Rapids, MI 1989) 174-175; R.T. FRANCE, *The Gospel of Mark. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI 2002) 170; J. MARCUS, *Mark. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 27A; New York 2000) 272; D.A. HAGNER, *Matthew 1-13* (WBC 33A; Grand Rapids, MI 2000) 282; J. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV. Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (AB 28A; Garden City, NY 1985) 920.

¹⁰ L. GASTON, "Beelzebul", *TZ* 18 (1962) 247-255, here 248; see also *HALOT* 263.

¹¹ W.E.M. AITKEN, "Beelzebul", *JBL* 31 (1912) 34-53, here 36-40.

¹² GASTON, "Beelzebul", 248-250. While Gaston in 1962 knew of only four occurrences of זבול in the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QM 12:1.2; 1QS 10:3; 1QH^a 11:35), several more can be added to this list from Cave 4 (4Q256 xix 1; 4Q298 3-4 i 1; 4Q403 i 1 41; 4Q408 3-3a 5; 4Q468b 1 4; 4Q491 5+6 1).

¹³ GASTON, "Beelzebul", 252ff.; see Philo of Byblos in EUSEBIUS, *Praeparatio evangelica* 1.10.7: "They considered him, the lord of heaven, to be the only god and called him Beelsamen (Βεελσαμην), which is 'Lord of Heaven' (κύριος οὐρανοῦ) in Phoenician, Zeus in Greek" (Translation from H.W. ATTRIDGE – R.A. ODEN, *Philo of Byblos. The Phoenician History. Introduction, Critical Text, Translation, Notes* [Washington, DC 1981] 41).

¹⁴ As initially suggested by E. NESTLE, "Zu Daniel", *ZAW* 4 (1884) 247-248; see also J.J. COLLINS, *Daniel. A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN 1993) 357-358.

¹⁵ Cf. 1 Macc 1,41-59; 2 Macc 6,2; JOSEPHUS, *Ant.* 12.5.4 §253; JEROME, *Comm. Dan.* 8,9.

¹⁶ GASTON, "Beelzebul", 253.

¹⁷ GASTON, "Beelzebul", 255.

While this ingenious suggestion bridged the centuries-long gap between the Canaanite deity and Jesus' lifetime, Gaston's explanation via a detour through *בעל שמים* / *בעלשמין* to reach *בעל זבול* remains problematic, especially the transition from the epithet for Zeus Olympius in the Seleucid period to Jesus in a kind of updated version with reference to his inappropriate comments on the temple. Furthermore, while Matthew perhaps made an intentional pun when associating Beelzebul with "master of the house" (*οικοδεσπότης*) in 10,25, it is crucial to note that *οικοδεσπότης* is a typical Matthean term, often used in the parables where it usually refers to God or Jesus (e.g., 20,1.11; 21,33)¹⁸. However, neither in Matthean usage nor elsewhere in the NT is *οικοδεσπότης* connected with the temple. Whatever the author understood by this word-play in 10,25, it is very doubtful that it has anything to do with the historically correct etymology of the demon's name¹⁹.

II. THE *בעיל דבבא* / *בעיל דבב* PROPOSAL

In his commentary on Matthew, Adolf Schlatter suggests that behind the Greek name, *Βεελζεβούλ*, *Βεεζεβούλ*, or *Βεελζεβούβ*, lay an Aramaic term *בעיל דבבא* / *בעיל דבב* meaning "enemy". This suggestion is allegedly demonstrated in Matt 13,39, where *ὁ ἐχθρός* is interpreted as *ὁ διάβολος*²⁰. Nevertheless, Gaston is right to remark that the Gospels treat Beelzebul as a proper name, not as an epithet²¹. While Schlatter's proposal is attractive, the question still remains how this archdemon came to have this name. My suggestion is to place it in the context of how other archdemons were treated in early Jewish demonology. For this, we must begin with the emergence of Satan as a demonic character.

A great deal of outstanding research has been done on the history and development of the Satan figure, but this is neither the time nor place for a full report of such endeavours²². To support my case, it will suffice to

¹⁸ Cf. HAGNER, *Matthew 1–13*, 282.

¹⁹ See DAY, *An Adversary in Heaven*, 152.

²⁰ A. SCHLATTER, *Der Evangelist Matthäus* (Stuttgart 1957) 343.

²¹ GASTON, "Beelzebul", 251.

²² DAY, *An Adversary in Heaven*; N. FORSYTH, *The Old Enemy. Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton 1989); P. SACCHI, *Jewish Apocalyptic and its History* (Sheffield 1996) 211–232; E. PAGELS, *The Origin of Satan* (New York 1995); F. KREUZER, "Der Antagonist. Der Satan in der hebräischen Bibel — eine bekannte Größe", *Bib* 86 (2005) 536–544; C. BREYTENBACH – P.L. DAY, "Satan", *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (eds. K. VAN DER TOORN – B. BECKING – P.W. VAN DER HORST) (Leiden 1999) 726–732; H.-J. FABRY, "'Satan' — Begriff und Wirklichkeit Untersuchung zur Dämonologie der alttestamentlichen Weisheitsliteratur", *Die Dämonen — Demons* (eds. A. LANGE – H. LICHTENBERGER –

make some general observations about the process. The meaning of the noun שָׁטָן is “adversary, enemy, accuser”, and there is also a denominative verb form שָׁטַן, “to be at enmity with, to be hostile towards, to make an enemy of someone”²³. It is used in the Hebrew Bible for a political or military opponent (1 Sam 29,4; 1 Kgs 5,18; 11,14.23.25), for a prosecutor in juridical settings (Ps 109,6), for someone who hinders a purpose (Num 22,22.32; 2 Sam 19,22), and, of course, for the role of a heavenly accuser, a member of the heavenly divine council (see Job 1–2; Zechariah 3), or simply a heavenly adversary (see 1 Chronicles 21). The role of an opponent or adversary, however, might also be performed by positive figures such as David (1 Sam 29,4) or even the angel of the Lord (see Numbers 22).

The discussion of whether שָׁטָן could already be found as a proper name (and not just a role) in the Hebrew Bible is not central to my argument. However, what we can see is a transformation into a distinct role of heavenly accuser or adversary. Subsequently, in the Second Temple Jewish literature, “satan” is used only for heavenly beings, mostly as a type of evil angelic being or demon (1QH^a xxii 25; xxiv 23; 1QSb i 8; 4Q504 1-2 iv 12), at times parallel to a “spirit of impurity” (11Q5 xix 15; 11Q6 iv-v 16)²⁴ or to an “evil one” (*Jub.* 23,29; 40,9; 46,2; 50,5). While it is mostly used in the singular, we also encounter a plural form, “satans” (*1 En.* 40,7; 65,6).

A second application of the word is the proper name “Satan”, denoting the heavenly archenemy of God (e.g., *Sir* 21,27; *As. Mos.* 10,1; *1 En.* 53,3; 54,6; *T. Job* 3–27; *T. Dan* 3,6; 5,6; 6,1; *T. Gad* 4,7). Thus, satan/Satan is both the *role* of a heavenly adversary or demonic/spiritual enemy (or even enemies) and, at the same time, the *name* of one particular heavenly archenemy who is in command of other demonic evil beings. An especially telling example comes from the *Parables of Enoch*, where we find Satan, as the named leader of evil hosts (*1 En.* 54,6)²⁵ alongside satans (plural) denoting the heavenly accusers of humankind (40,7).

Therefore, we can observe a development from a noun with a negative meaning (“enemy, adversary, accuser”) to a role and concrete heavenly

K.F.D. RÖMHELD) (Tübingen 2003) 269-291; A. HURVITZ, “The Date of the Prose Tale of Job Linguistically Reconsidered”, *HTR* 67 (1984) 17-34, here 18-20. Various aspects of this discussion have been surveyed by D.R. BROWN, “The Devil in the Details: A Survey of Research on Satan in Biblical Studies”, *CBR* 9 (2011) 200-227.

²³ HALOT 1316-1317.

²⁴ A. LANGE, “Considerations Concerning the ‘Spirit of Impurity’ in Zech 13:2”, *Die Dämonen — Demons* (eds. A. LANGE – H. LICHTENBERGER – K.F.D. RÖMHELD) (Tübingen 2003) 259-262. In a similar sense, see also 4Q213a 1 17.

²⁵ Satanail is in a similar position as the leader of fallen angels in *2 En.* 18,2-3 [J].

figure (leader of evil beings) that personifies this meaning. This development probably gave rise to a common pattern of “making an archdemon”, as the parallel process can also be seen in the case of other archdemons in Early Judaism.

Mastema is the next archdemon attested in Second Temple Jewish literature. His name derives from the Hebrew root שטם (“to be at enmity with, harass, bear a grudge against”), which is probably a secondary form of שטן²⁶. Its derivation, משטמה, means “hostility” (Hos 9,7-8), and in the Dead Sea Scrolls it is usually used in the construction מלאך משטמה, in the sense of “angel of hostility” (or in the plural, מלאכי המשטמות)²⁷. The proper name of the archdemon Mastema is known only through the *Book of Jubilees*, in which he plays a prominent role as the chief of the evil spirits (*Jub.* 10,8)²⁸. These evil spirits — demons — are descendants of the heavenly Watchers and the daughters of men (see *Jub.* 5; 10,4-5) who, according to *1 En.* 15,8 – 16,1, emanated from the corpses of the giants after the Flood, and in *Jub.* 10,8-11 one tenth of them were left to Mastema to exercise his will for the purpose of destroying and misleading²⁹. Mastema becomes, as the leader of demons, the chief opponent to the Angel of Presence with his hosts. For example, he sends birds to eat the seed that people had planted in order to increase poverty (11,11-13), instigates the test of Abraham’s faith in the story of the sacrifice of Isaac (17,16), helps the Egyptians in various ways against Moses and the Israelites, and even tries to kill Moses on his way back from Midian (ch. 48). The role of Mastema in the Akedah story (17,15 – 18,19) is that of the accuser, which is the same role that Satan plays in a retelling of the Akedah in *b. Sanh.* 89b³⁰, and it also resembles the role of השטן in Job 1–2³¹. In *Jub.* 10,11, Mastema is even explicitly identified as a satan, i.e. the role of the heavenly adversary or demonic/spiritual enemy as described above³².

²⁶ HALOT 1316; DCH 8:122.

²⁷ DCH 5:502-503. In 1QM 13,10-11, there is מלאך משטמה (“angel of hostility”), in apposition to Belial (see below).

²⁸ On the figure of Mastema in *Jubilees*, see J.C. VANDERKAM, “Mastema in the Qumran Literature and the *Book of Jubilees*”, *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls*. John Collins at Seventy (eds. J. BADEN – H. NAJMAN – E. TIGCHELAAR) (Leiden 2016) 1350-1360; D. HAMIDOVIĆ, “Mastéma, le démon de main de Yhwh dans le livre des jubilés”, *Colères et repentirs divins*. Actes du colloque organisé par le Collège de France, Paris, les 24 et 25 avril 2013 (eds. J.-M. DURAND – L. MARTI – T. RÖMER) (Göttingen 2015) 109-120.

²⁹ J.C. VANDERKAM, *Jubilees 1–21* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN 2018) 347.

³⁰ VANDERKAM, *Jubilees 1–21*, 561-562.

³¹ M. SEGAL, *The Book of Jubilees*. Rewritten Bible, Redaction, Ideology and Theology (Leiden 2007) 10.

³² VANDERKAM, *Jubilees 1–21*, 407; VANDERKAM, “Mastema in the Qumran”, 1351-1352.

Satan is mentioned several other times in *Jubilees* in a stereotypical saying describing ideal periods in the biblical narrative: “there was no satan or any evil one” (*Jub.* 23,29; 40,9; 46,2; 50,5). In these passages, satan is not a proper name but rather represents the power of evil and destruction that hinders peace and blessing.

The last archdemon from Second Temple Judaism one should mention here is Belial. The Hebrew בלעל means “worthlessness, wickedness.” In the Hebrew Bible it is used to describe a worthless or wicked person (*Deut* 13,14; *Judg* 19,22; 1 *Sam* 1,16; 25,17.25; 2 *Sam* 16,7; 20,1; *Prov* 16,27; 19,28; *Nah* 1,11), or worthless or wicked words/deeds (*Pss* 41,8; 101,3)³³. This meaning is expanded notably in the Dead Sea Scrolls and especially in the sectarian texts where Belial becomes the name for God’s chief nemesis. He is presented as an opponent to the Prince of Light (*CD* 5,18), the leader of the Sons of Darkness and the army of Belial in the eschatological war (1*QM* 1,1.13; 4,2; 11,8; 13,2; 16,1), and the leader of his spirits, dominion, and congregation (*CD* 12,2; 1*QS* 1,18; 2,19; 1*QM* 1,15; 13,2; 1*QH*^a 10,24; 11*Q13* 2,12). He leads God’s people astray by affecting their hearts or souls (1*QS* 10,21; 1*QH*^a 14,24-25; 15,6), setting traps and plotting against them (*CD* 4,5; 1*QH*^a 10,18; 4*Q174* 1-2 i 8; 4*Q177* 12-13 i 6). His fate is the final destruction followed by the eternal blessing for the righteous (4*Q174* 1-3 ii 2; 4*Q177* 12-13 i 2; 4*Q286* 7 ii 6; 11*Q13* 3,7)³⁴. Belial is also depicted as the chief of the deceitful spirits in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (*T. Reu.* 2,2; *T. Levi* 3,3; 18,12; *T. Jud.* 25,3; *T. Iss.* 7,7; *T. Dan* 1,7; *T. Jos.* 7,4; *T. Benj.* 3,3) and is prominent in the *Martyrdom of Isaiah* (1,9; 2,4; 3,11.13; 4,2.4.14.16.18; 5,1.4.15), where he is equated with Satan (2,2.7; 5,16) and described as “the angel of iniquity who rules this world” (2,4).

From these three examples, we can recognize a common pattern of “making an archdemon”: firstly, it stems from a negative word referring to hostility, enmity, wickedness; secondly, it becomes the quality or role of an evil spiritual being/demon; and finally, it transforms into

³³ *HALOT* 133-134; *DCH* 2:178-179; cf. V. MAAG, “Belij'al im Alten Testament”, *TZ* 21 (1965) 287-299.

³⁴ On Belial in Qumran, see, e.g., D. DIMANT, “Between Qumran Sectarian and Non-Sectarian Texts: The Case of Belial and Mastema”, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Contemporary Culture* (eds. A.D. ROITMAN – L.H. SCHIFFMAN – S. TZOREF) (Leiden 2010) 237-246; C. MARTONE, “Evil or Devil? Belial Between the Bible and Qumran”, *Hen* 26 (2004) 115-127; A. STEUDEL, “God and Belial”, *The Dead Sea Scrolls. Fifty Years after Their Discovery* (eds. L.H. SCHIFFMAN – E. TOV – J.C. VANDERKAM) (Jerusalem 2000) 332-340; F. DAOUST, “Belial in the Dead Sea Scrolls: From Worthless to Stumbling Block to Archenemy”, *New Vistas on Early Judaism and Christianity From Enoch to Montreal and Back* (eds. L. DiTOMMASO – G.S. OEGEMA) (London 2016) 217-233.

a developed evil figure, an archenemy of God, a leader of evil hosts/demons/spirits. In the cases of Mastema and Belial, we have also seen their association with the role of satan.

I propose interpreting the origin of Beelzebul/Beelzebub/*B^ēlḏbābā*, especially against the backdrop of this analysis of “making an archdemon”. The Aramaic term **בעיל דבבא** / **בעיל דבב** means “enemy, foe, opponent”³⁵ and is a loan-word from the Akkadian *bēl dabābi* meaning “adversary” in court or “enemy” in general³⁶. It is well attested in the early Targumim (*Onqelos*, *Jonathan*, *Pseudo-Jonathan*, *Fragmentary Targum*), Talmud, and also in Christian Syriac (as **ܒܥܝܠܕܒܒܐ**)³⁷. In the Targumim, **בעיל דבבא** is used both in the singular and plural and usually translates the Hebrew **אויב** or **שנא** (e.g., *Tg. Onq.* Gen 49,8; Lev 26,7.8.17; Exod 1,10; *Tg. Jon.* Ezek 16,27) or **צר** (e.g., *Tg. Jon.* Isa 1,24). In some cases, it doubles the expression, e.g., alongside the Aramaic **סנא** (*Frg. Tg.* MS Paris 110 Exod 15,6) or supplements the text (e.g., *Tg. Jon.* Isa 14,21)³⁸. There are also attested verbal forms (e.g., *Tg. Neof.* Gen 42,7) and even an abstract noun “enmity” (**בעיל דבבו**) stemming from this word³⁹. Douglas Penney and Michael Wise suggest another occurrence in a reconstruction of the first line of an Aramaic incantation text from Qumran (4Q560 i 1) as **בעל־דבב**⁴⁰, although considering the photographs (PAM 43.602), this reading is very unlikely, and Émile Puech, the editor of the text, even calls it “impossible”⁴¹. However, the cognate Aramaic noun **דבב** (“lawsuit”), from the Akkadian noun *dabābu* (“plea, complaint, lawsuit”)⁴², is present in the Aramaic documentary papyri from Elephantine (*TAD* B2.6; B2.8; B3.12) and Aramaic and Nabatean papyri from Naḥal Ḥever (5/6Hev 2; 3; 4; 7; XHev/SeNab 2).

³⁵ M. SOKOLOFF, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Baltimore, MD 2002) 227; J. LEVY, *Chaldäisches Wörterbuch über die Targumim* (Leipzig 1867) 1:159; M. JASTROW, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (London 1903) 1:276.

³⁶ *CAD* 3:3-4; S.A. KAUFMAN, *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic* (Chicago, IL 1974) 42.

³⁷ On Christian Syriac attestation, see M. SOKOLOFF, *A Syriac Lexicon* (Piscataway, NJ 2009) 171.

³⁸ For the extensive documentation, see KWIC of lemma “b^lḏbb, b^lḏbb” in *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon* – CAL (online: <http://cal.huc.edu/oneentry.php?lemma=b%28lḏbb%20N&cits=all>).

³⁹ M. SOKOLOFF, *A Syriac Lexicon*, 171.

⁴⁰ D.L. PENNEY – M.O. WISE, “By the Power of Beelzebub: An Aramaic Incantation Formula from Qumran (4Q560)”, *JBL* 113 (1994) 627-650, here 631-634.

⁴¹ É. PUECH, “560. 4QLivret magique ar”, in É. PUECH, *Qumran Cave 4.XXVII: Textes araméens, deuxième partie: 4Q550-575, 580-582* (DJD 37; Oxford 2009) 296-297.

⁴² *CAD* 3:3.

The Aramaic *B'eldbābā* is thus, as I suggest, a viable candidate for the origin of the name of the archdemon known from the synoptic tradition. Now, when comparing it to the other Second Temple Jewish archdemons mentioned above, we can see some significant similarities. The meaning of the Aramaic *בעיל דבב* agrees with the meaning of the Hebrew *שטן* and *שטם* as a negative noun referring to “enemy, adversary, opponent”, which, in the case of both *שטן* and *שטם*, and similarly to *בליעל*, was the point of departure for the archdemons Satan, Mastema and Belial. Furthermore, Beelzebul/Beelzebub/*B'eldbābā* is also described as the leader of demons/hosts/evil spirits (ὁ ἄρχων τῶν δαιμονίων, Mark 3,21 par.), likened to or identified with Satan (Mark 3,22 par.), and labelled as an “unclean spirit” (cf. Mark 3,30) in the same way as Satan (11Q5 xix 15; 11Q6 iv-v 16), or Mastema’s spirits (*Jub.* 10,1).

Unfortunately, we do not have any other sources to tell us more about this enigmatic demon whose fame was earned by association with a miracle-worker from Nazareth, but it might be instructive to mention that without the *Book of Jubilees* we would not know about the career of Mastema either. Therefore, in our research, we are required to work only with clues and hints that we can assemble into meaningful yet hypothetical explanations.

Obviously, it is impossible to argue against virtually unanimous ancient manuscript evidence for Βεελζεβούλ (eventually Βεεζεβούλ). The reading “Beelzebub” is extant only in later Latin and Syriac versions, which might have been assimilated to 2 Kings 1. However, if the origin of the archdemon *B'eldbābā* is to be found in the Palestinian Aramaic-speaking village context of Galilee, as the synoptic tradition suggests⁴³, then it is conceivable that during the transmission of the Beelzebul controversy to Greek and from the variety of oral performances to the written form some changes (intentional and unintentional) might have occurred⁴⁴, especially

⁴³ See J. GNILKA, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*. 1. Teilband Mk 1 – 8,26 (EKK II/1; Neukirchen 1978) 149; J.D. CROSSAN, *The Historical Jesus*. The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant (New York 1992) 319.

⁴⁴ It seems apparent that the final Βεελζεβούλ stems from the Hebrew rather than Aramaic *Vorlage*, and, therefore, is not directly derived from the Aramaic *B'eldbābā*. Since the Aramaic *B'eldbābā* (and also the Akkadian *bēl dabābī*) reflects the Proto-Semitic **d* which would usually come into Hebrew as *d*, not *z*, as in case of **ḏ* (cf. T.J. Lewis, “Beelzebul”, *ABD* 1:638–640, here 639), the final form containing *z* might have resulted from an initial confusion of the Aramaic *בעל דבבא* for another meaning “master of flies”, as the Hebrew counterpart of the Aramaic *דבבא* / *דבב* (“fly”) is *זבוב*. Furthermore, Peggy Day claims that *זבול* and *זבוב* were “inextricably linked in the tradition by the substitution of *zēbûb* for *zēbûl* in 2 Kings 1” and thus “Beelzebul is inextricably bound to Beelzebub” (DAY, *An Adversary in Heaven*, 157). However, these transitions are hypothetical, and the transmission was not necessarily linear and simplistic.

since the meaning of the name might have been obscured from early on, as the multiple explanations offered in the synoptic tradition suggest.

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SUMMARY

The article offers additional support for a marginal proposal that connects the meaning of the name Beelzebul/Beelzebub with the Aramaic term **בעיל דבב** / **בעיל דבבא** meaning “enemy, accuser”. The suggestion is to understand this name in the context of the formation of other archdemons (Satan, Mastema and Belial) in early Jewish demonology. It exhibits a common pattern of “making an archdemon” within which it situates the origin of Beelzebul/Beelzebub.

PAUL'S DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION IN 2 THESSALONIANS 1–2*

Soon after sending his first letter to the Thessalonian Christians, Paul writes this second letter to them apparently upon the news that they are suffering from intensifying persecutions by their pagan opponents and that they are also deeply shaken by a prophecy that the Day of the Lord has already come. So, in the first and main part of 2 Thessalonians (chs. 1–2), in order to comfort and assure them, Paul makes it clear that the Day of the Lord is yet to come, since the parousia of the Lord Jesus will take place only after the revelation of “the man of lawlessness”. Moreover, Paul repeatedly hammers out the message that “the just judgment of God” (1,5) on the eventual Day of the Lord will be justification and glorification in God’s kingdom for them, the believers in the gospel of Christ (1,5.7.10.11-12; 2,13-14.16-17), but condemnation and destruction for their persecutors and others who refuse to believe the truth of the gospel but instead follow the lie of “the man of lawlessness”, the agent of Satan (1,6.8-9; 2,9-12). Therefore, addressing the Thessalonian believers’ anxiety about the Day of the Lord at the center of the letter (2,1-8), Paul comforts and assures them by explaining God’s “just judgment” (1,5) before it (1,5-12) and after it (2,9-17) in terms of his doctrine of justification by faith.

I. EXEGESIS

1. *2 Thess 1,5-10*

In the first thanksgiving section (1,3-10), Paul says that the readers’ “endurance and faith” in all their persecutions (v. 4) is “evidence of the just judgment of God (ἐνδειγμα τῆς δικαίας κρίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ) that [they] would be counted worthy (καταξιωθῆναι) of the kingdom of God” (v. 5). This is the thesis of the message that he proclaims to the persecuted and anxious Christians of Thessalonica in 2 Thessalonians. He substantiates it first by explaining God’s “just (δικαία) judgment” at the

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parousia of the Lord Jesus Christ in terms of the principle of appropriate "retribution" (ἀνταποδοῦναι, as in vv. 6-7): it is to reverse the unjust reality of this fallen world and establish justice by "repaying with affliction" those who afflict them, and "[repaying] with rest" those who are afflicted.

Then, he substantiates it further by explaining God's "just" judgment in terms of his doctrine of justification (see vv. 8-10a): God "inflicts vengeance (ἐκδίκησιν) upon those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus", so that they may be excluded from the glory of the Lord, while granting "his saints", "all who have believed (the gospel)", to participate in his glory. Noteworthy here is that in vv. 8-10a the second person pronouns and verbs that are predominant in the preceding verses (3-7a) and following verses (10b-12) are absent, and the specific references to the Thessalonian believers and their persecutors give way to generalized references to all those who do not know God and disobey the gospel as well as to God's "saints", "all who have believed" ¹. Then, by adding the causal ὅτι clause in v. 10b, which is to be understood in connection with the missing main clause filled in from the context, Paul applies personally to the readers the positive outcome of God's just judgment for believers (v. 10a): "[Therefore you will also receive this blessing of participation in the Lord's glory] because you have believed our testimony [i.e., the gospel]". These points mark out vv. 8-10a as a generalized explanation about God's just judgment ². In fact, in the passage Paul presents an explanation of God's judgment according to his doctrine of justification, which he first considers in v. 5 and then develops with further reflection in vv. 10b-12. This view is supported by 2,9-14, which parallels the explanation of our passage (vv. 5-10) in contrasting descriptions of the readers and unbelievers and also contains a similarly generalized statement about God's judgment according to his doctrine of justification in 2,12.

It is to be noted how strongly Paul emphasizes faith in the gospel as the criterion of God's "just judgment" at the parousia of the Lord Jesus Christ:

¹ Like "every" (πᾶς) in Rom 1,16, "all" (πάντες/πάντας) in Rom 3,22-24 (cf. also Rom 3,28-30), and "all/every" (πᾶς) in Rom 10,12-13, "all" (πᾶς) here in v 10a represents an element of Paul's doctrine of justification, with which he stresses that God justifies without any distinction all human beings who believe the gospel (see also Gal 3,26.28). This offers a further indication that in vv. 8-10a Paul unfolds his doctrine of justification (on 2,12, see below).

² See C.A. WANAMAKER, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians* (NIGT; Grand Rapids, MI 1990) 232, who thinks that here Paul is inserting pre-formed material of uncertain origin; see also E. BEST, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (BNTC; London 1977) 267.

the Thessalonian Christians will be given the verdict of being worthy of God's kingdom and rewarded with salvation ("rest" and "glory") because of their faith in the gospel (vv. 4-5, 7, 10), while their persecutors will be repaid with affliction (v. 6) because they belong to "those who do not know God and [...] do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus", to whom only "vengeance" (ἐκδίκησις) or "punishment (δίκη) of eternal destruction" is due (vv. 8-9). Paul's distinctive formulation, "to obey the gospel", here reflects his understanding of the gospel, cited in Rom 1,3-4, and of every nation's duty to render "the obedience of faith" to the "name" of "Jesus Christ our Lord" whom the gospel proclaims (see Rom 1,4b-5; 15,18; 16,26; 2 Cor 9,13; also Gal 5,7; Rom 2,8). In Rom 10,9-10, Paul says that if we "believe in our heart that God raised Jesus from the dead" and "confess with [our] lips that Jesus is Lord", we will be "justified" or "saved" (NB: This is a summary presentation of the gospel of Rom 1,3-4 + 16-17³). Then, in the same context (Rom 10,16), after making the charge that "not all have obeyed the gospel", Paul goes on to cite Isa 53,1 ("Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?") in order to substantiate that charge. Thus he makes it clear that "obedience to the gospel" is "belief in the gospel" or "obedience of faith to the gospel", which brings justification or salvation. In our passage he does the same by contrasting the damned as those "who do not obey the gospel" (v. 8) with the Thessalonian Christians who "believed" the gospel, the "testimony" borne by him and his colleagues (v. 10; cf. 2,14; 1 Thess 1,5; 1 Cor 1,6). Furthermore, in v. 8, by modifying "the gospel" with the phrase "of our Lord Jesus" (only here; elsewhere usually "the gospel of Christ"), he indicates not only that he is referring to the gospel cited in Rom 1,3-4, the gospel concerning God's Son Jesus who was raised up and installed as the Lord over all, but also that he is talking about faith in that gospel and obedience to the Lord Jesus which that gospel demands.

God justifies (and so saves) "everyone" who believes that gospel and confesses Jesus as the Lord, i.e., all who commit themselves in obedience to his lordship (see Rom 1,16-17; 10,9-10). By accepting the gospel (i.e., believing it), we come to "know God" properly as the Father of the Lord Jesus who has sent his Son to be incarnate in Jesus, the seed of David, and raised him from the dead in order to exalt him as his Son who bears his name "Lord" and exercises his power on his behalf. The Thessalonian Christians accepted this gospel and so came to know and serve the "living and true God" and to "wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come

³ See S. KIM, *Justification and God's Kingdom* (Tübingen 2018) 15-19.

[i.e., justifies us at the last judgment]” (1 Thess 1,9-10) ⁴. But their persecutors belong to those who do not know God properly and do not render the obedience of faith to the gospel. From Paul’s point of view, they are willfully refusing to avail themselves by faith of God’s saving grace offered in the gospel, unlike the readers who have “believed” the gospel (v. 10b). Therefore, God will mete out to them ἐκδίκησις (“vengeance”) or δίκη (“punishment”) of eternal destruction (vv. 8-9), instead of δικαίωσις (“justification”) and salvation at the parousia of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, together with v. 5 and v. 10, v. 8 reflects clearly the doctrine of justification that Paul introduces in Rom 1,3-4.16-17 and then applies to the Jews in Romans 10 after expounding it in Romans 1-8.

In view of this, we may take the infinitive καταξιωθῆναι in v. 5 as a material synonym of the infinitive δικαιωθῆναι (“to be counted righteous, to be justified”) ⁵, a key concept in Paul’s doctrine of justification, and we may interpret the verdict of God’s “just judgment” for believers as “καταξιωθῆναι of the kingdom of God” in terms of the gospel of Rom 1,3-4.16-17. Here it is necessary to remember that by believing that “God raised Jesus from the dead” (and exalted him as his Son to exercise his kingship or lordship) and by confessing “Jesus is the Lord” in accordance with that gospel of Rom 1,3-4 at our baptism (Rom 10,9-10), we are transferred from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, God’s Son, which is the present manifestation of the kingdom of God (see further 1 Cor 15,23-28, which unfolds the gospel of Rom 1,3-4). It is also necessary to remember that God’s righteousness (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) is not just a judicial concept but more fundamentally a relational concept regarding God’s covenantal faithfulness, and that God’s justification (δικαιοῦν, δικαιῶσθαι) is not only a forensic act of acquittal but also an act of restoring sinners to the right, covenantal relationship to himself, so that his justification of us (his declaration of us as righteous) involves our transfer from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God, which is represented by the kingdom of his Son Jesus Christ the Lord at present. This truth is most succinctly stated in Col 1,13-14: “[God] has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins [i.e., justification]”. Thus, justification is a

⁴ For the views that the thesis of Paul’s doctrine of justification in Rom 1,16-17 is a soteriological application of the Christological gospel cited in Rom 1,3-4, and that Paul’s gospel summarized in 1 Thess 1,9-10 reflects them both, see KIM, *Justification and God’s Kingdom*, 15-19.

⁵ See O.A. RAINBOW, “Justification according to Paul’s Thessalonian Correspondence”, *BBB* 19 (2009) 249-274, here 251.

Herrschaftswechsel ⁶, a transfer into the kingdom or lordship sphere of Christ Jesus the Lord, so that we may live “in the Lord” (ἐν κυρίῳ). At our baptism, by our affirmation of faith in the gospel of Jesus’ atoning death and his resurrection/exaltation and by our confession of him as Lord, we are justified, i.e. acquitted of our sins and transferred into the kingdom of God and his Son Jesus Christ (Rom 10,9-10).

However, this is only the firstfruits of our justification, and we are yet to have the consummated justification at the last judgment at the parousia of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the meantime, we are to live, rendering “the obedience of faith” to the Lord Jesus, to his kingship or lordship, by availing ourselves by faith of the leading and enabling of his Spirit, the Holy Spirit, rather than obeying Satan, who tempts us through our flesh (Rom 8,1-13; Gal 5,16-25) ⁷. Then, at the parousia of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are to stand before the judgment seat of God, who will judge us according to our works (Rom 2,5-16; 14,10-12; 2 Cor 5,10; see also Rom 6,19-23; 1 Cor 3,10-17; 4,1-5; 6,9-11; 9,16-27; Gal 5,19-21; 6,7-8; Phil 2,12-17; Col 1,21-23; 1 Thess 3,12-13; 5,23), according to the fruits of our “obedience of faith” (Rom 1,5; etc.; i.e. our “work of faith”, 2 Thess 1,11; 1 Thess 1,3) or the “fruits of righteousness/sanctification” (Phil 1,11; Rom 6,22) that we have borne through the aid of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5,22-23). There, with the intercession of God’s Son Jesus Christ we shall finally obtain from God the ultimate justification, which is entering his consummated kingdom (1 Cor 6,9; 15,50; Gal 5,21) and participating in the glory of God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ the Lord (Rom 5,2; 8:17-18,29-39; 2 Thess 1,10,12; 2,14). The Thessalonian Christians have “[led] a life worthily (ἀξίως) of God, who calls [them] into his own kingdom and glory”, in accordance with Paul’s charge (1 Thess 2,11-12). Paul sees their “endurance and faith in all [their] persecutions” (2 Thess 1,4) as evidence for such a life. Therefore, he is wholly convinced that this is also sure “evidence” (ἐνδειγμα) that in his “just judgment” God will certainly grant them that ultimate justification, i.e., the ultimate verdict: “You are worthy [καταξιωθῆναι] to enter into my kingdom!” (2 Thess 1,5) ⁸, and make them participate in his glory.

⁶ See E. KÄSEMANN, “Gottesgerechtigkeit bei Paulus”, in *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen*, Vol. 2 (Göttingen 1966) 185-193 (ET: “‘The Righteousness of God’ in Paul”, in *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia, PA 1969) 174-182).

⁷ For the concept of the “present process of justification”, see P. STUHLMACHER, *Revisiting Paul’s Doctrine of Justification. A Challenge to the New Perspective*, With an Essay by Donald A. Hagner (Downers Grove, IL 2001) 55-69; *pace* RAINBOW, “Justification”, 274 n. 72.

⁸ Contrast the verdict for unbelievers in v. 9, which implicitly suggests that “the punishment of eternal destruction” for them consists in exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from his glory.

2. 2 Thess 1,11-12

Even with this conviction, Paul adds a prayer to the long thanksgiving section (vv. 3-10), asking God to help the Thessalonian believers obtain at the last judgment the blessing referred to in v. 10 (note the opening εἰς ὃ in v. 11), namely their participation in the Lord's glory (which summarily includes in itself the blessings mentioned in vv. 5 and 7). The petitions of the prayer are specified by two clauses: that God "make the [Thessalonian Christians] worthy (ἀξιόσῃ) of his call", and that he "enable [them] to fulfill [their] every resolve to do good and their work of faith". But the two clauses must be taken together, for the latter petition concretizes the former one. God called the Thessalonian believers into his kingdom (1 Thess 2,12) through the gospel (2 Thess 2,14), offering in it their justification or sanctification (i.e., offering to make them the righteous or holy people of God) so that they may participate in his glory. By their acceptance of the gospel, God's call for them through it has become actualized at their baptism. Therefore, now they are to live as God's holy or righteous people, rendering the "obedience of faith" to God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who reigns over God's people on his behalf. Such a life is that which is "worthy of [God's] call": to have the will or resolve to do good and to work it out in every situation in accordance with the will of the Lord Jesus. The Thessalonian Christians cannot do this by themselves. Therefore, Paul is praying for God to enable them to do those things "by power" (ἐν δυνάμει, v. 11, no doubt, by the power of his Spirit) or by his "grace" (v. 12)⁹. The purpose of God's enabling them to do good works by his power or grace is for them to obtain the consummated justification (i.e., their entry into the consummated kingdom of God) and their participation in the glory of the Lord Jesus (v. 12; see also its parallel in 2,14b), in the ultimate fulfilment of the purpose of God's call (see Rom 8,30).

Thus here Paul expresses his standard teaching about the present process of justification (or sanctification): those who were justified or sanctified at baptism need to do good works in the present for the consummation of their justification or sanctification at God's last judgment (see, e.g.,

⁹ See J.-N. ALETTI, *Justification by Faith in the Letters of Saint Paul*. Keys to Interpretation (trans. P. MANNING MEYER; Roma 2015) 207: "[...] if for Paul, believers have been justified [= have become just] not by their good works but by the grace of God, this does not mean that once justified they have remained incapable of good works: it is necessary for them to do what is good (Rom 13,3) and, with this same divine grace, accomplish all sorts of good deeds (2 Cor 9,8). Divine grace suppresses neither the will nor the behavior of the believer, but rather it gives the capacity to do what is good".

Rom 2,5-16; 1 Cor 1,8; 2 Cor 5,10; Phil 1,10; 1 Thess 3,12-13)¹⁰; God enables them to do these things by the power of his Spirit or his grace (see 1 Cor 15,10; Phil 2,12-16; Col 1,29; 1 Thess 4,8); and they can do them only by availing themselves of that grace of God by faith or by walking according to the Holy Spirit of God and his Son (see Romans 7-8), so that their good works are the “work of faith” (v. 11; see also 1 Thess 1,3). Thus, justification is wrought by God’s grace and through our faith not only at our baptism but also during the present process of it and at the last judgment (see Rom 8,31-39; 1 Thess 1,10). Therefore, it is quite impressive to see Paul rounding off his references to the three phases of justification or salvation — God’s baptismal call of believers (see Gal 1,6), his present help for them to fulfill the good “work of faith”, and his eschatological granting of glory — as being “according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ”.

3. *2 Thess 2,9-12*

It is most probably the anxiety about God’s last judgment that has made the Thessalonian Christians greatly shaken by a prophecy that the Day of the Lord has already come (see 2,1-2). So, in order to comfort and assure them, Paul first explains in 2,3-8 that the Day of the Lord is yet to come only after the revelation of “the man of lawlessness”, which is being restrained at present. Then, in v. 8 he concludes that explanation by affirming that eventually, with the restrainer (ὁ κατέχων) removed, the lawless man will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will destroy him by his parousia.

But then, in vv. 9-12, instead of continuing the narrative with a description of the Lord Jesus’ parousia and “our assembling to meet him” (see 2,1) or the coming of the Day of the Lord, Paul steps back to describe the deceptive work of the lawless man and its effects on unbelievers, as well as God’s judgment of them. Then, in vv. 13-14, he follows the reference to God’s judgment of unbelievers up with a strongly reassuring message of God’s salvation of the readers, the Thessalonian Christians, for their faith in the gospel. Thus, with the two sections of vv. 9-12 and vv. 13-14, Paul elaborates on the themes that he propounded in 1,5-10, namely God’s “just judgment” that will reward the Thessalonian Christians and other believers with salvation and glory in his kingdom, while condemning and destroying their persecutors and others who refuse to

¹⁰ See n. 14 below for the view that justification and sanctification are parallel metaphors for salvation (see esp. 1 Cor 6,11).

believe the gospel and instead do evil. Thus it is clear that Paul's chief concern in 2,9-14 (and 16-17), as well as in 1,5-10 (and 11-12), is to stress repeatedly these different prospects of God's judgment and thereby to comfort and assure the suffering Thessalonian Christians who are anxious about the last judgment of God at the parousia of the Lord Jesus Christ or on the Day of the Lord.

Therefore, the first and main part of 2 Thessalonians, namely chs. 1-2, is to be seen as having as its main theme not the apocalyptic scenario of the revelation of the lawless man and the parousia of the Lord Jesus Christ, but rather the justification/salvation of believers and the condemnation of unbelievers at God's "just judgment" at the parousia of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In 2,9-12 Paul says that by demonstrating the great power through signs and wonders, the lawless man, when he comes, will deceive people to believe his lie and indulge in unrighteousness (ἀδικία) so as to perish, instead of accepting the truth (i.e., the gospel; see 2 Cor 4,2; 13,8; Gal 2,5.14; 5,7; Eph 1,13; Col 1,5, 6) so as to be saved (vv. 9-10): "Therefore, God will send them a working of delusion (ἐνέργειαν πλάνης), so that they should believe the lie, so that all may be judged who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (vv. 11-12). Here one must note, first of all, how in vv. 10 and 12 Paul makes it clear that acceptance of, or faith in, the truth (i.e., the gospel) leads to salvation, while unbelief leads to condemnation and destruction. Also to be noted are three important features of v. 12: (a) he states this truth in a generalized form ("all who did not believe the truth [would] be judged") by way of concluding his teaching in the preceding verses (vv. 9-11) just as he does in 1,8-10; (b) the language of the statement echoes Rom 2,8; and (c) its content (together with that of v. 10b) is a negative expression of the doctrine of justification that he fundamentally sets forth in Rom 1,16-17: all who believe the gospel will be saved.

Noteworthy is how Paul's description of unbelievers' sins and his explanation of God's judicial response to them in our passage form a close parallel to what is expressed in Rom 1,18-32: (a) just as here unbelievers are charged with having rejected "the truth" of the gospel, so in the Romans passage pagans are charged with having rejected "the truth" revealed in creation (Rom 1,18.25); (b) both here (1,8) and in Rom 1,21 unbelievers are charged with not acknowledging God properly; (c) their rejection of "the truth" of the true God led them to believe "the lie" of a false god both here and in Rom 1,25; (d) both here in v. 11 and in the Romans passage (1,24.26.28) God is said to respond to unbelievers' rejection of "the truth" by abandoning them to, or making them fall deeper

into, the world of “the lie” and unrighteousness (ἀδικία); (e) the ways of expressing this thought in the two passages are very similar: both here and in Rom 1,26 the thought is introduced by διὰ τοῦτο (cf. also διό in Rom 1,24), and “God [will] send them a working of delusion” here corresponds to “God gave them up to a reprobate mind” in Rom 1,28 (see also vv. 24, 26); (f) unbelievers’ rejection of “the truth” and their indulgence in unrighteousness form an organic unity both here and in the Romans passage; and (g) just as Paul declares in the Romans passage that God’s wrath is revealed for all such unbelieving evildoers (see Rom 1,18; 2,5.8) in contrast to God’s justification of all those who believe the gospel (see Rom 1,16-17), so in our passage he declares that all those who did not believe the truth (the gospel) will be condemned at God’s judgment (see v. 12; cf. Rom 2,8-9) in contrast to [all] believers ¹¹ obtaining God’s salvation and glory (vv. 13-14).

There is a difference between our passage and the Romans passage in the temporal perspective ¹². However, for our present purpose, it is important to note that in the two passages Paul employs the same principle of human sin and God’s response as well as the same concepts and vocabulary in explaining God’s condemnation of unbelievers of the truth/gospel in contrast to his justification or salvation of believers of it.

What is expressed in v. 12 offers a close parallel to Rom 2,8 (τοῖς ἀπειθοῦσιν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ πειθομένοις δὲ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ, “[God’s judgment of] those who disobey the truth but obey unrighteousness”), which Paul has already echoed in speaking of God’s judgment of “those who do not obey the gospel (τοῖς μὴ ὑπακούουσιν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ)” in our 1,8. In fact, his explanation of “the just judgment of God” (τῆς δικαίας κρίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ, 1,5) in our 1,4-12 and 2,10-17 closely parallels that in Rom 2,5-11 (δικαιοκρισίας τοῦ θεοῦ, v. 5). In Rom 2,6 he apparently cites Prov 24,12 to affirm the principle of “God’s just judgment”: “[God] will recompense (ἀποδώσει) every human being according to one’s works”. Then, he goes on to apply it to “those who [...] do not obey (ἀπειθοῦσιν) the truth (ἀληθείᾳ) [...] but obey unrighteousness (ἀδικίᾳ)” and to “those who by patience (καθ’ ὑπομονήν) do good work (ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ)”: to the former

¹¹ See 1,10: “all who believed”.

¹² Whereas our passage looks from the perspective of the future parousia of “the lawless man” at the unbelievers’ (past) rejection of the gospel truth, their (future) response to the lawless man’s lie, and God’s (future) judgment, the passage in Romans looks from the perspective of the present preaching of the gospel at the pagans’ (past) rejection of God’s truth revealed in creation, and God’s (past) judgment that has present effects in the lives of those pagans. Nevertheless, the principle of human rejection of God’s truth and salvation leading to God’s response with a judicial abandonment of them to remain in their reprobate mind and moral depravity is the same in both passages.

God will repay with “wrath and fury”, “affliction (θλῖψιν) and distress”, and to the latter with “glory” (δόξαν), “peace” (εἰρήνην) and “eternal life” (ζωὴν αἰώνιον), “on the Day of wrath when God’s just judgment will be revealed” (ἀποκάλυψις) (Rom 2,5-11). Employing vocabulary and ideas found also in Rom 2,5-11, Paul, in 2 Thess 1,4-12 and 2,9-14, explains “God’s just judgment” that is to take place with the “revelation” (ἀποκάλυψις) of the Lord Jesus (1,7) on the Day of the Lord (2,9-14); he speaks of the damned as “those who [...] do not obey (ὑπακούουσιν) the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (1,8) or as “those who do not accept or believe the truth (ἀληθεία [of the gospel]) but have pleasure in unrighteousness (ἀδικία)” (2,10.12), whereas the Thessalonian Christians believe the gospel or “the truth” (1,10; 2,13-14) and maintain faith in “patience” (ὑπομονή, 1,4); he affirms that God will “recompense” (ἀνταποδοῦναι) unbelieving evildoers with affliction (θλῖψιν, 1,6) or “give [them] vengeance” (διδόντος ἐκδίκησιν, 1,8), the “punishment” (δίκην) of “eternal destruction” (ὄλεθρον αἰώνιον, 1,9; cf. ἀπολλύναι, 2,10) instead of “eternal life” (ζωὴν αἰώνιον), but will give “glory” (δόξαν) and “rest” (ἄνεσιν) in God’s kingdom to those who believe (the truth of) the gospel and do good work (1,11: εὐδοκίαν ἀγαθωσύνης καὶ ἔργον πίστεως; 2,17: ἔργῳ [...] ἀγαθῷ) by patience (ὑπομονή) (1,4.5.7.10-12; 2,13-14.17); and he affirms that this truth applies to “all” unbelievers and “all” believers (1,10; 2,12) (regardless of the distinction between “Jews and Gentiles”, Rom 2,10; cf. Rom 1,16). Thus there is an extensive and close parallelism between the passages under examination in 2 Thessalonians (1,5-12 and 2,9-14) and Rom 2,5-11 in explaining “God’s just judgment”.

4. 2 Thess 2,13-14

Formally this is a thanksgiving section, but in content it is a direct continuation of the preceding section in vv. 9-12. So, after speaking of God’s coming condemnation of those who refuse to believe the gospel, in this section Paul goes on to give thanks to God for his saving work for the Thessalonian Christians. God chose them for salvation, called them through the gospel preached by Paul and his colleagues, sanctified them by his Spirit, i.e., made them become his holy people by leading them by the Holy Spirit to believe the truth (i.e., the gospel) and confess Jesus as Lord (see Rom 10,9-10 plus 1 Cor 12,3b) ¹³ and

¹³ Note that ἁγιασμὸς πνεύματος is placed ahead of πίστις ἀληθείας in the construction governed by one instrumental preposition ἐν: ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος καὶ πίστει ἀληθείας. Paul means that the Thessalonians were enabled by the prevenient grace of God operating through his Spirit to believe the truth (the gospel) proclaimed to them.

thus to be transferred into his and his Son's kingdom (see 1 Cor 6,11; Col 1,13-14), so that they may obtain the consummation of salvation at the eschaton.

The "salvation" for which God chose and called the readers is to obtain "the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ" at his parousia. It presupposes the understanding that God exalted the risen Christ to his right hand and made him "Lord" (see Rom 1,3-4; Phil 2,9-11), entrusting him with his "dominion and glory and kingship" (see 1 Cor 15,20-27, which, unfolding the gospel of Rom 1,3-4, echoes Dan 7,14 as well as Pss 8,7; 110,1), and that Christ is "the image of God" who bears "the glory of God in (his) face" (2 Cor 4,4,6). Paul often expresses Christians' eschatological salvation in terms of obtaining the glory of God or Christ (see Rom 5,2; 8,17-18.21.30; 1 Cor 2,7; 15,43; 2 Cor 4,17; Phil 3,21; 1 Thess 2,12; cf. also 2 Cor 3,18). In 1,8-12, which is a material parallel to 2,10-14, he already said that the readers would participate in the glory of the Lord Jesus at his parousia because they believed the gospel preached by his missionary team, while their opponents would be excluded from it and destroyed because they refused to believe the gospel and obey the Lord Jesus. He recapitulates it here, making it clearer by way of concluding his message of assurance and comfort for the readers.

Thus, having applied in 2,10-12 to unrighteous unbelievers his doctrine of justification through faith in the gospel in a negative way, now here, in 2,13-14, Paul applies it to the Thessalonian Christians in a positive way. In the former he maintains the juridical framework of that doctrine with his emphasis on God's condemnation (κριθῶσιν) of unbelievers for their belief in the lie of "the lawless man" and for their unrighteousness (ἀδικία), instead of believing the truth (of Christ). But here he explains that doctrine using the category of sanctification within the juridical framework of the last judgment (this framework must be seen as presupposed in vv. 13-14, as the passage is set in contrast to the preceding section in vv. 9-12)¹⁴.

¹⁴ In this respect, vv. 13-14 are similar to 1 Thess 3,12-13 and 5,23. Justification (restoring us to the right relationship with God, i.e. making us members of the righteous people of God) and sanctification (consecrating us to belong to God, i.e. making us members of the holy people of God) are parallel metaphors for salvation, so that they are not to be seen in terms of the *ordo salutis* of Protestant dogmatics. The fact that Paul sets sanctification within the judicial framework of the last judgment indicates that justification is the more fundamental category of Paul's soteriology, and that in the Thessalonian correspondence (and the Corinthian correspondence) he contextualizes his justification doctrine partly in terms of sanctification because the Thessalonian Christians (like the Corinthian Christians) face the danger of idolatry and immorality in their pagan environment rather than the issue of keeping the Mosaic law (see also Rom 6,19-22).

5. 2 Thess 2,16-17

As in 1 Thess 3,11-13, this wish-prayer concludes the first part of the letter (chs. 1-2, eschatological teachings) and makes a transition to the second part (3,6-15, exhortations). In content, it has close parallels to the earlier prayer-report of 1,11-12. Paul opens this prayer by addressing the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father as having “loved us” in reference to their saving acts mentioned in vv. 13-14, namely their election, calling and sanctification of us. Paul addresses them also as having “given us” the fruit of those saving acts, namely the hope of obtaining the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ (at his parousia), which he calls “eternal comfort and good hope”¹⁵. By summarizing the saving acts of God and Christ thus in terms of their “loving and giving”, Paul has already implied that they were the acts of divine grace. However, in order to make that truth explicit and emphatic, he adds the phrase “by grace”, which he employs elsewhere as shorthand or virtual *terminus technicus* for God’s work of justification (or salvation) (see, e.g., Rom 3,24; 4,4.16; 5,2.15; 6,1.15; Gal 1,6; 2,21; 5,4; Eph 2,5.7.8). Then, in v. 17, Paul makes the petition for the God and Christ of saving grace to “comfort” the readers’ “hearts and help them stand firm” (στηρίξαι, in the “traditions”¹⁶ of the right faith; see v. 15) to produce “every good work and word” (no doubt, towards the consummation of their salvation, namely, obtaining the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ)¹⁷, as he similarly does in the wish-prayers of 1 Thess 3,12-13; 5,23 (see also Phil 1,9-11).

As he did in the prayer-report of 1,11-12, so also in this wish-prayer Paul rounds off his references to the three phases of justification or

¹⁵ Paul puts “eternal comfort” ahead of “good hope” in order to make the suffering Thessalonian Christians immediately feel the effects of the good hope. For the designation of “good hope” for obtaining the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ as the result of justification, see Rom 5,1-2: “the hope of sharing the glory of God”; see also Rom 8,24-25.

¹⁶ In view of the fact that Paul is alarmed about the Thessalonian Christians being “deceived” and “shaken” by a false prophecy about the Day of the Lord (2,1-3) and that he places the exhortation in v. 15 (NB the opening inferential ἄρα οὖν) in the middle of warning the readers about the deceptive teachings or claims of “the lawless man” and encouraging them with his gospel of justification of believers (vv. 9-14 and vv. 16-17), we need to see that by the plural “traditions” he refers to the Christological/soteriological/ethical teachings as well as the eschatological teachings that he delivered to the Thessalonians during his founding mission among them. If so, the doctrine of justification that he expresses in our passages was a “tradition” that he delivered to them at that time. Of course, this is confirmed by 1 Thess 1,10 and 5,9-10 (see also 4,1-8). See n. 20 below.

¹⁷ If by “every good work and word” Paul has in view also the charge that he is to issue in 3,6-12 to the disorderly idlers to work for their own bread and not to be busybodies, as well as the general good “work of faith” that he mentioned in the parallel passage in 1,11, he must mean that as the specific forms of fulfilling the Lord’s commandment to love one’s neighbor those works are part of the good “work of faith” that the idlers ought to produce.

salvation — God's saving work of the past (vv. 13-14a) and of the future (v. 14b) and also of the present (v. 17) — as being "by grace".

However, it is noteworthy that in speaking of God's salvation of believers in his "just judgment" (i.e. his justification) in the five sections of 2 Thessalonians 1-2, Paul refers to God's "grace" only twice (1,12; 2,11), whereas he refers to "faith" seven times (1,10 [2x].11; 2,11.12.13; plus the implicit "obedience [of faith] to the gospel" in 1,8). In Romans and Galatians, Paul frequently refers to God's "grace" as well as human "faith" (often together, as in Rom 3,24; 4,4-5.16; 5,2.15-20; 6,1-4; Gal 2,20-21; 5,4-5) in connection with his doctrine of justification. In those letters, while unfolding that doctrine, Paul explains God's saving act of delivering Christ to a death of vicarious atonement for us, referring to it as his "grace", and stresses that sinners avail themselves "by faith" in the gospel of that saving act of God in Christ. However, in the passages in 2 Thessalonians he is not concerned to unfold or expound formally his justification doctrine *per se*, but concentrates rather on reassuring and comforting the anxious and persecuted recipients of the letter by highlighting the final element of that doctrine. Therefore, here he does not explain that God's justification is based on the grace he gives us through the death and resurrection of Christ but repeatedly stresses only that at the parousia of the Lord Jesus Christ the Thessalonian Christians will receive justification (salvation) because they have believed the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ while their persecutors will receive condemnation and destruction because they have not believed it. Hence in 2 Thess 1,5-10.11-12; 2,9-12.13-14, Paul makes repeated and prominent references to belief or unbelief in the gospel as the criterion of justification (salvation) or condemnation (destruction). Thereby he makes that element of his doctrine of justification clearly appear: Faith in the gospel is the means whereby human beings avail themselves of God's saving work offered in it.

In 1,11b and 2,13-14 Paul refers, albeit only partially and in a summary form, to God's saving acts that have been wrought: in 1,11 to God's baptismal "call" of believers, and in 2,13-14 to his election of believers, his sanctification of them by the Spirit, and his call of them through the gospel — three divine actions which provide the ground for their eschatological salvation. Hence, in 1,12 and 2,16, Paul uses the word "grace" in a summary reference to those saving acts of God, even if the list does not include the central element of God's saving work, namely Christ's atoning death and resurrection¹⁸, in reference or allusion to which he uses

¹⁸ Surely not because Paul is uninterested in it, but because for his purposes in 2 Thessalonians he does not feel the need to refer to it. NB his emphatic reference to Christ's atoning death in 1 Thess 5,9-10; see also an allusion to it in 1 Thess 1,10.

the word "grace" elsewhere with noticeable frequency. In 1,12, with the phrase "according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus", Paul has chiefly in view their present saving work of enabling believers to fulfill their work of faith in the present process that leads to the consummation of their justification or sanctification (v. 11; cf. 1 Cor 15,10; Phil 2,12-13; Col 1,29), whereas with the phrase "by grace" in 2,16 he refers chiefly to their saving acts already wrought (vv. 13-14a) and secondarily also to their work of helping believers in their present process of justification (v. 17). It appears clear that Paul refers to God's grace when he explains God's saving work (of the past, the present and/or the future), and that in 2 Thessalonians he refers to it only twice because in it he is concerned not with expounding the doctrine of justification *per se*, but with comforting and assuring the suffering and anxious Thessalonian Christians with his doctrine of justification: in his "just judgment" God will grant them salvation in his kingdom because they have believed the gospel, but God will condemn and destroy their persecutors because they have not believed it.

II. ARGUMENTS

So far, we have observed how both in 1,5-12 and 2,9-17 Paul expresses ¹⁹ his doctrine of justification. The presence of the doctrine of justification in them is discernible in the following ways: in the sixfold occurrence of the *δικ*-terms in references to "the just judgment of God" on the Day of the Lord within the short spaces of those two passages (1,5.6.8.9; 2,10.12); the sevenfold reference to faith (1,10 [2×].11; 2,11.12.13; plus the implicit "obedience [of faith] to the gospel" in 1:8; two more in 2 Thess 1,3-4; cf. also eightfold reference in 1 Thess 1,3.8; 3,2.5.6.7.10; 5,8); the references to good works (1,11; 2,17) in contrast to unbelievers' unrighteousness (2,10.12); and the ultimate appeal to "the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" for the salvation of believers (1,12; 2,16; see also the reference to God's "call", "election" and "love" of believers in 1,11; 2,13.14.16). So we have here multiple references to most of the essential elements of Paul's doctrine of justification.

We have observed how in explaining God's last judgment both in 1,5-12 and 2,9-17 Paul echoes the teachings that he later expounds in Romans 1-2 (or 3) about fallen humanity and about God's condemnation of all unbelievers and his justification of all who believe the gospel. We may compare

¹⁹ This verb is used here because, although in those passages Paul expresses the substance of the doctrine, he does not mean to teach it formally.

his presentation of believers' consummated justification (or sanctification) in terms of their obtaining God's glory at the last judgment in 1,11-12 and in 2,13-17 with what he does in Romans. There also he indicts fallen humanity for its sins (Rom 1,18 – 3,20) declaring that "all have sinned and lack the glory of God" (Rom 3,23), and he concludes his exposition of the gospel of justification by affirming that the consummation of believers' justification is to obtain God's glory (Rom 5,2; 8,17-18.21.30). Within this parallelism between the chs. 1–2 of our letter and chs. 1–8 of Romans, which trace the overall scheme of the human rebellion against God and God's redemption or justification of believers in the gospel of Christ Jesus to participate in divine glory, there is also the parallelism between 2,13-14 ("God elected, called, and sanctified you, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ") and Rom 8,30 ("[God] predestined, called, justified, and glorified [believers]"). Both passages have the same purpose of comforting and reassuring the suffering and anxious Christians in view of the last judgment (Rom 8,18-39). This overall parallelism lends support to the view that in 2 Thessalonians 1–2 Paul expresses his doctrine of justification and that there is a clear continuity between this early letter and the subsequent letter to the Romans ²⁰.

Our view that Paul's teachings on God's last judgment in 2 Thessalonians 1–2 is based on his doctrine of justification may come to many readers as a shock. But, for me, what is really surprising is the fact that, while noting, in the margins, several parallels of 2,9-14 in Rom 1,18-32, the Nestle-Aland editions of Greek New Testament have failed to note that Rom 1,16-17 constitutes a parallel with 2 Thess 1,8; 2,10.12 (negative parallel) and with 2 Thess 1,10; 2,13 (positive parallel):

Rom 1,16-17: "[The gospel of Rom 1,2-4] is the power of God for salvation to every one who believes [in it] [...] For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live'".

2 Thess 1,8: "[God] inflicts vengeance (ἐκδίκησιν) upon those who do not know God and who do not obey [i.e., believe] the gospel of our Lord Jesus".

2 Thess 2,10-12: All those who were deluded by the lawless man to believe his lie and did not believe the truth [i.e., the gospel] will be condemned and destroyed "because they refused to love the truth [i.e., gospel] and so be saved".

²⁰ If 2 Thessalonians is a genuine Pauline letter, as we are suggesting here, then there is only about seven years intervening between it and Romans. By the time of writing 2 Thessalonians (AD 50), Paul, the former "Pharisaic scribe" (M. HENGEL – A.M. SCHWEMER, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch. The Unknown Years* [Louisville, KY 1997] 10; see Gal 1,13-14), already had behind him a period longer than twice that to develop a mature Christian theology.

2 Thess 1,10: All who have believed the gospel will participate in the glory of the Lord at his parousia “because our testimony was believed” (for this summary of the verse, see the exegesis above).

2 Thess 2,13: “God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth [i.e., gospel]”.

Likewise, in their most thorough treatments of the references in 2 Thessalonians to God’s judgment on the Day of the Lord, commentators do note relevant parallels in Rom 1,18-32, but they invariably comment on 2 Thess 1,8-10; 2,10-12.13 without relating these passages to Rom 1,16-17 and to Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith. Most commentators on 2 Thessalonians overlook the multiple parallels between 2 Thess 1,5-12; 2,9-14 and Rom 2,5-11. However, some of them do recognize at least the significant parallelism of the two phrases: “the just judgment of God” in 2 Thess 1,5 and Rom 2,5; and “obedience not to the gospel [the truth] but to unrighteousness” in 2 Thess 1,8; 2,12 and Rom 2,8. However, they also fail to see them in relation to Rom 1,16-17.

Most NT scholars presume that the doctrine of justification is absent in 1 Thessalonians. That conviction is often cited to support the theory of the late development of that doctrine in Pauline theology, and that assumption of its late development in turn makes commentators and other scholars overlook several clear signs of that doctrine in 1 Thessalonians²¹. This consensus about the absence of the justification doctrine in 1 Thessalonians, coupled with the doubt about the Pauline authorship of 2 Thessalonians, has led commentators to explain Paul’s concentrated teaching about God’s “just judgment” in the first two chapters of 2 Thessalonians without even considering a possible reflection of that doctrine, in spite of the fact that 2 Thess 1,5-12 and 2,9-17 show proportionally the greatest concentration of the δικ-terms and of references to faith in all the Pauline letters, as well as the decisive fact that faith in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is repeatedly presented as the criterion for God’s “just judgment” for salvation on the Day of the Lord.

Commenting on 1 Thessalonians, scholars regularly point to the absence of the δικαιοῦν terminology and of references to the law in order to deny the presence of the doctrine of justification in that letter. But in the face of the strong emphasis on the idea of our redemption from God’s coming

²¹ Apparently, RAINBOW, “Justification”, 249-274, is the only exception in seeing the presence of the doctrine of justification in both letters to the Thessalonians. For the view that that doctrine is implicitly present in 1 Thessalonians, see also HENGEL – SCHWEMER, *Paul between Damascus and Antioch*, 301-310; R. RIESNER, *Paul’s Early Period. Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI 1998) 394-403; S. KIM, *Paul and the New Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI – Tübingen 2002) 85-100.

wrath through the Lord Jesus Christ's death in vicarious atonement (1 Thess 5,9-10) and his intercession for us as God's Son at the last judgment at his parousia (1 Thess 1,10; 3,12-13; cf. Rom 4,25b; 5,10b; 8,32-34), such an argument represents a most unimaginatively literalistic interpretation of the Pauline texts. It is my contention that it would be an even greater failure of literalistic exegesis if anyone argues against the presence of the doctrine of justification in 2 Thessalonians 1-2 by pointing to the absence of the verb δικαιοῦν/δικαιοῦσθαι and of any reference to the law. Besides the abundance of δικ-terms, we can easily understand that καταξιωθῆναι of 1,5 closely corresponds to δικαιωθῆναι and that ἐκδίκησις of 1,8 is an antonym of δικαίωσις, just as ἀδικία of 2,10.12 is the antonym of δικαιοσύνη. Clearly we have here a most serious fallacy of identifying the biblical concept or doctrine of justification exclusively with a particular word — the verb δικαιοῦν/δικαιοῦσθαι or the noun δικαιοσύνη — disregarding so many cognate δικ-terms and other synonymous (or antonymous) words and concepts present in our texts that deal with God's last judgment²². Here we should simply ask: If redemption or salvation of believers from God's eschatological wrath at the parousia of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess 1,10; 5,9-10) cannot be called "justification," then how is it to be called? Or if the verdict of God's "just judgment" for the Thessalonian believers that they are worthy of his kingdom (2 Thess 1,5) is not "justification", then what is "justification"?

III. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Both 1 and 2 Thessalonians, but especially 2 Thessalonians, clearly show that Paul teaches his doctrine of justification by grace through faith and that he does this even where the question of observance of the law is not raised by the Judaizers in connection with his Gentile mission. These facts support the view that the justification doctrine was an essential form of Paul's gospel preaching from the earliest days of his Gentile mission, if not even before them, and that his soteriology remained constant in its essentials from this early correspondence to the later epistles to the Romans and to the Philippians²³. Clearly this view is supported more concretely

²² See J. BARR, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London 1961) 269: "the linguistic bearer of the theological statement is usually the sentence and the still larger literary complex and not the word or the morphological and syntactical mechanisms"; see also 233, 235-236, 249-250, 265-266. See further RAINBOW, "Justification", 251 n. 8.

²³ See n. 20 above. Luke nicely supports this view with his report of Paul's sermon at the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13,16b-52, which has not only a clear echo of Paul's doctrine of justification (δικαιωθῆναι / δικαιοῦται) by faith in Christ without the

by the fact that there is such extensive parallelism between 2 Thess 1,5-12; 2,9-17 and Romans 1-2 and 8, as we have shown.

Actually the Thessalonian correspondence helps us understand why Paul had to teach the doctrine of justification as an essential element in his gospel preaching or as a chief form of it even when there was no dispute about his Gentile mission or the law of Moses: he had to do it *because he had to speak of the consummation of salvation in terms of deliverance from God's wrath or condemnation at the last judgment according to his OT-Jewish theological thinking — even to Greeks or Gentiles* (e.g. 1 Thess 1,10; 3,12-13; 4,6; 5,9-10.23-24; 2 Thess 1,5-10; 2,9-14; see also Rom 1,18 – 3,20; 1 Cor 1,8; 4,5; 2 Cor 5,10; Phil 1,10-11; Acts 17,31)²⁴.

Thus the presence of the justification doctrine in 1 and 2 Thessalonians raises serious questions about the whole “New Perspective” movement, which focuses on the Jew-Gentile relationship in Paul's Gentile mission to explain both the origin and meaning of that doctrine.

Furthermore, if our exegesis of 2 Thess 1,5-12 and 2,9-17 is right, it supports our efforts to interpret Paul's justification doctrine both in the juridical terms of acquittal and in the relational terms of transference or entrance into God's kingdom, and also to emphasize that the present process of justification is an essential part of that doctrine²⁵, since all these points are present in 2 Thessalonians, as we have shown.

Of course, the presence of the Pauline doctrine of justification in 2 Thessalonians 1-2 would also strengthen greatly the argument for the authenticity of 2 Thessalonians.

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works of the law (vv. 38-39) but also a close overall parallelism with Paul's introduction of his gospel in Rom 1,1-5.16-17. To be noted is that Luke places Paul's preaching of the gospel in this form at Pisidian Antioch before the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15). Pace ALETTI, *Justification by Faith*, 209.

²⁴ U. SCHNELLE (*Apostle Paul. His Life and Theology* [Grand Rapids, MI 2005] 190) recognizes this: “The declaration about the last judgment in 1 Thessalonians and the two Corinthian letters thus point to the acceptance of human beings *coram Deo* (before God) as a pervasive theme of Pauline theology. It belongs to the *theme* of justification”. Yet he goes on to say: “but (it) by no means has a causal connection to the specific *doctrine* of justification as found in Galatians and Romans” (his italics). But, for us, his distinction between “theme” and “doctrine” here is only an arbitrary attempt or a *Verlegenheitslösung*, which is born of the rigid scholarly dogma that the justification doctrine is present only in Romans, Galatians and Philippians 3.

²⁵ For more details about these points, see KIM, *Justification and God's Kingdom*.

SUMMARY

In 2 Thessalonians 1–2, to assure the persecuted Christians anxious about the Day of the Lord, Paul presents a brief scenario of the future revelation of “the man of lawlessness” and the parousia of the Lord Jesus Christ (2,1-8). And in the surrounding passages (1,5-12 and 2,9-17) he repeats the message that in his “just judgment” God will deliver a verdict of salvation for them, the believers of the gospel, while meting out condemnation for their unbelieving persecutors. In doing this, he echoes many words and themes of Romans 1–2, including 1,16-17. This new observation of Paul’s justification doctrine in 2 Thessalonians has some significant implications for understanding Pauline soteriology, in general, and the message of 2 Thessalonians, in particular.

ETERNAL GENERATION OF THE SON IN HEB 1,5

The first four verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews rival the prologue to John's Gospel for the distinction of expressing the most exalted Christology in the New Testament. Jesus is introduced as the Son, through whom God has spoken in a way that is superior to his revelation through the prophets (1,1-2). With language that echoes Jewish Wisdom speculation, Jesus is proclaimed to be "the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being", the one who "sustains all things by his powerful word" (1,3a). He has made purification for sins and "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (1,3b), demonstrating his superiority to the angels (1,4).

As he proceeds to the scriptural proofs for these lofty claims, the author of Hebrews begins with a quotation of God's address to Israel's king in Ps 2,7: "You are my Son; today I have begotten you" (1,5a). In its original context, Psalm 2 was probably used at the coronation of Israel's king. The formula, "today I have begotten you", appears to have been a performative statement: the heir to the throne entered into his new status at this moment. He became God's son on the day of his accession to kingship. In the context of Hebrews, however, the psalm is interpreted as referring to Jesus, the Son of God, and it has already been established that the Son is eternal and the agent of creation (1,2-3). By supplying a new context for the psalm, the author of Hebrews also reinterprets the concept of divine sonship. It goes beyond what would normally be associated with the messiah. Susan Docherty observes that the provision of a new co-text enables the author to offer a new interpretation of the term "Son" in Ps 2,7 "as a reference to the creator and heir of all things, the one bearing the stamp of God's nature and currently seated at God's right hand, not to any other possible kind of son"¹. The Son in Hebrews is more than a merely human agent of God; he is characterized by his preexistence and eternal nature².

It is therefore difficult to know what the author may have had in mind when he quoted the words "today I have begotten you". Some scholars have suggested that he was not thinking of a specific time, but that this

¹ S.E. DOCHERTY, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews*. A Case Study in Early Jewish Bible Interpretation (WUNT II/260; Tübingen 2009) 147, 162.

² Similarly, E. GRÄSSER, *An die Hebräer*, Band 1 (Hebr 1-6) (EKK 17/1; Zurich 1990) 75.

quotation is only intended to establish the fact that Jesus is the Son ³. If so, however, the author had no reason to include these words at all; he could have limited his quotation to the formula “You are my Son”, as the heavenly voice does at Jesus’ baptism (Mark 1,11 par.; cf. Mark 9,7 par.).

Interpreters have offered a number of different suggestions for the referent of the term “today” (σήμερον). Origen and many other church fathers saw in the term a testimony of the Father’s eternal begetting of the Son, an interpretation that is less popular among modern scholars ⁴. Another view that has few followers today is that the phrase concerns the birth of Jesus as a human being ⁵. Instead, modern scholars favor the association of the term “today” with Jesus’ ascension ⁶, possibly combined with an allusion to his resurrection ⁷. Some scholars have also found a

³ J. MOFFATT, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ICC; Edinburgh 1924) 9-10.

⁴ ORIGEN, *Commentary on John*, 1.204 (cited from ORIGEN, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John: Books 1–10* [The Fathers of the Church 80; trans. R.E. HEINE; Washington, D.C. 1989] 74); JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Homilies on Hebrews*, 2.2; AUGUSTINE, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Psalmum II.VI (cited from AUGUSTINE, *Opera omnia* 7 [eds. A.B. CAILLAU – M.N.S. GUILLON; Paris 1835] 119); V. DIETRICH, *Summary of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 1.5 (as quoted by R.K. RITTIGERS, *Hebrews, James* [Reformation Commentary on Scripture 13; Downers Grove, IL 2017] 20); T. CAJETAN, *Comments on Hebrews*, 1.5 (as quoted by RITTIGERS, *Hebrews, James*, 21). For a recent defense of this view, see M.N. PIERCE, “Hebrews 1 and the Son Begotten ‘Today’”, *Retrieving Eternal Generation* (eds. F. SANDERS – S.R. SWAIN) (Grand Rapids, MI 2017). Other scholars that are open to this interpretation include M.R. D’ANGELO, *Moses in the Letter to the Hebrews* (SBLDS 42; Missoula, MT 1979) 165; R. BAUCKHAM, “The Divinity of Jesus Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews”, *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (eds. R. BAUCKHAM – D. DRIVER – T. HART – N. MACDONALD) (Grand Rapids, MI 2009) 34.

⁵ THEODORET OF CYR, *Interpretation of Hebrews 1* (as quoted by E.M. HEEN – P.D.W. KREY, eds., *Hebrews* [Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture; Downers Grove, IL 2005] 22); CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 2.7 (as quoted by C.A. BLAISING – C.S. HARDIN, eds., *Psalms 1–50* [Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture; Downers Grove, IL 2008] 14); CASSIDORUS, *Explanations of the Psalms*, 2.8 (as quoted by BLAISING – HARDIN, eds., *Psalms 1–50*, 15); OECUMENIUS, *Fragments on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 1.5 (as quoted by HEEN – KREY, eds., *Hebrews*, 23); M. LUTHER (LW 29:113); C. SPICQ, *L’Épître aux Hébreux*, vol. 2 (Paris 1953) 16.

⁶ A. VANHOYE, *Situation du Christ. Hébreux 1–2* (LD 58; Paris 1969) 141-142; H.W. ATTRIDGE, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN 1989) 53-54; F.F. BRUCE, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT; Revised edition; Grand Rapids, MI 1990) 54; W.L. LANE, *Hebrews 1–8* (WBC 47A; Dallas, TX 1991) 26; H.-F. WEISS, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (KEK 13; Göttingen 1991) 160-161; P. ELLINGWORTH, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI 1993) 113-114; A.P. MITCHELL, *Hebrews* (SP 13; Collegeville, MN 2007) 47; G.L. COCKERILL, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI 2012) 103; J.W. KLEINIG, *Hebrews* (Concordia Commentary; St. Louis, MO 2017) 70.

⁷ B.F. WESTCOTT, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. Notes and Essays on the Greek Text (London ³1909) 21; D.A. HAGNER, *Hebrews* (NIBCNT; Peabody, MA 1990) 32. For a specific reference to the resurrection, see J. CALVIN, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews* (Calvin’s commentaries; trans. J. OWEN; Grand Rapids, MI

reference to the eschatological “now”, the present new age inaugurated by the work of Jesus ⁸. Allusions to Jesus’ baptism or transfiguration have also been suggested ⁹.

In this article, I will evaluate these different interpretations in light of the theological argument in Hebrews. My thesis is that Origen’s interpretation is the one that is most congenial with the immediate context. When the author of Hebrews quotes the phrase “today I have begotten you”, he is thinking of the eternal relationship between the Father and the Son, a relationship that may be metaphorically described as an eternal begetting. Before I turn to the merits of this interpretation, I will evaluate the most common alternative views.

I. ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATIONS OF “TODAY”

1. *Baptism and/or Transfiguration*

A reference to Jesus’ baptism and/or transfiguration must be ruled out as alien to the context. Such interpretations owe more to the parallel in the Synoptic accounts than to Hebrews.

2. *Eschatological “now”*

In contrast, the interpretation that “today” refers to the eschatological “now” may appeal to the use of this term elsewhere in the epistle. In 3,7-11, the author quotes Ps 95,7-11: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart as in the rebellion” (see also 3,15; 4,7). In the author’s reapplication of the psalm, “today” is the day when the audience hears his sermon, the day when they are called to respond to the message. However, this eschatological understanding of “today” is determined by the author’s characteristic use of Psalm 95. There is no reason to assume that his interpretation of Psalm 95 should govern his reading of Psalm 2, nor that he would have understood the common word “today” with such a fixed meaning. His use of exegetical methods is quite diverse, as he tailors his exegesis to the argument he is making in each individual case ¹⁰.

1979) 42; F. DELITZSCH, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, vol. 2 (Clark’s Foreign Theological Library; trans. T.L. KINGSBURY; Edinburgh 1876) 64.

⁸ GRÄSSER, *Hebräer*, 75; L.T. JOHNSON, *Hebrews. A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville, KY 2006) 77.

⁹ For the former, see BRUCE, *Hebrews*, 54; for the latter, see O. MICHEL, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (KEK; Göttingen ⁸1984) 110.

¹⁰ On the author’s exegetical method, see A. RASCHER, *Schriftauslegung und Christologie im Hebräerbrieff* (BZNW 153; Berlin 2007).

3. *Birth as a Human Being*

The interpretation that the author is referring to Jesus' birth as a human being or to the incarnation may find better support in the immediate context. Following the quotation of Ps 2,7, the author quickly proceeds to 2 Sam 7,14 and Deut 32,43. The introduction to the latter of these quotations may be translated: "When he will lead the firstborn back into the world, he says" (1,6a). If this statement refers to the parousia, then it stands to reason that the author's previous statement should have referred to the incarnation. However, most scholars favor a different translation of these words, along the lines of the NRSV: "And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world". With this translation, there is no hint of a successive bringing into the world. What is more, such a reference to the incarnation is alien to the theology of Hebrews. While the incarnation is important to the argument of the epistle (2,14-15), there is no indication that Jesus enters his sonship or has his sonship confirmed at the time of his birth. In Hebrews, Jesus' sonship is eternal.

4. *Ascension into Heaven*

A possible reference to Jesus' resurrection would correspond to the use of the same psalm in Acts 13,33-34, where Paul quotes the same verse (Ps 2,7) and explains that it has been fulfilled at the resurrection. In Hebrews, however, the focus is primarily on Christ's ascension and exaltation at God's right hand, and most modern scholars conclude that the author has the exaltation in mind here as well.

Elsewhere, the author of Hebrews describes Jesus' exaltation as a coronation. In 2,9, he applies Psalm 8 to Jesus as the Son of Man and affirms: "but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone". As Psalm 2 was probably originally used in connection with the enthronement of the king, an application of the psalm to Jesus' enthronement at his ascension would seem natural. However, unlike the psalmist, the author of Hebrews does not associate coronation with bestowal of sonship. To him, Jesus' sonship is eternal. Many scholars therefore suggest that the exaltation was the time when Jesus' status was confirmed and manifested (compare Rom 1,4), rather than the time when it was bestowed ¹¹.

¹¹ Bruce explains that the exaltation was the time when Christ "entered into the full exercise of all the prerogatives implied by his Sonship" (*Hebrews*, 54). Attridge, however, maintains that Hebrews has combined conflicting Christological ideas (*Hebrews*, 54).

This interpretation finds considerable support in the broader argument of Hebrews. Even if Jesus' sonship is eternal, his sonship is also associated with his mission, which reached its completion when he was exalted at his ascension. In 5,5, the author quotes Ps 2,7 once again and connects Christ's sonship with his assignment as high priest: "So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you'". Christ is high priest because God has appointed him as his Son. His qualification as high priest is in turn based on his imperishable life (Heb 7,16), which may presuppose his resurrection. If we read a temporal sequence into these references, the resurrection precedes Christ's appointment as Son and high priest.

The point in Heb 5,5, however, is that Christ did not make himself high priest, but that he was appointed as such by God. The time of the appointment is not really in view. In 5,5-6, the author juxtaposes two quotations regarding Christ's sonship and his priesthood (Ps 2,7 in Heb 5,5, and Ps 110,4 in Heb 5,6). One might infer that the appointment to priesthood coincided with the appointment to sonship. It is doubtful, however, that the author intended this inference to be made. Elsewhere, he appears to presuppose that Jesus was already the Son when he was appointed high priest. In 7,28, he states that "the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son [as high priest]".

The understanding in Hebrews is that Jesus is eminently qualified for his assignment because he is Son ¹². His sonship is not affirmed at the completion of his mission; it is the presupposition for it. In 5,8, the author explains that, "[a]lthough he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered". In other words, his Sonship is the logical presupposition for his suffering.

A similar logical sequence is found in 6,19-20: "We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek". Jesus' becoming high priest forever is the presupposition for his entrance behind the curtain ¹³. It could not be otherwise, as only the high priest is qualified to enter.

¹² Similarly, A.L.B. PEELER, *You Are My Son*. The Family of God in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Library of New Testament Studies 486; London 2014) 108.

¹³ In Hebrews, an adverbial aorist participle normally denotes a logically or temporally preceding action; see also 2,3; 5,9.10; 6,10; 11,13.19.25.26.27.30.31; 12,2b.17.25. There are also a few cases in which the action described by the adverbial aorist participle and the action described by the finite verb may be viewed as simultaneous: 7,27; 9,12;

The idea that sonship is the presupposition for suffering also serves as a foundation for the principal exhortation in the epistle: to remain faithful in the midst of trial. The model is the Son, who suffered patiently (5,8-10; 13,12). His example motivates the audience to imitate him and accept their suffering as the way in which the Father treats them as sons (12,5-11). The point is not that they will be appointed sons or confirmed as sons when they have completed their suffering. They are already sons. That knowledge should motivate them to accept the suffering they have to bear.

In any case, the decisive objection against taking “today” as a reference to the exaltation is that the reference to Christ’s eschatological victory is of no relevance to the author’s argument in this context: to show Christ’s superiority over the angels. His superiority is not based on his eschatological triumph, but on his exceptional status as the one who provides the most authoritative communication from God. The argument leads up to an exhortation to heed the message of the Lord (2,1-4), and the basis for the argument is that Jesus has a more intimate relationship with the Father because he is Son (1,2).

II. “TODAY” AS ETERNITY

That leaves us with the interpretation favored by Origen and many church fathers, that the author was thinking of the Son’s eternal relationship with the Father, employing the metaphor of an eternal begetting. If the author thought of eternity as a perennial “today”, he was not alone. In a commentary on Deut 4,4, another Hellenistic Jew, Philo, maintains: “Now ‘to-day’ is the limitless age that never comes to an end [...] the absolutely correct name for ‘endless age’ is ‘to-day’” (*On Flight and Finding* 57). The question is whether there is any evidence that the author had a concept of an eternal begetting. If he assumes such an understanding of “today”, he does not explain it or develop it. One might wonder how he could have expected his audience to have understood that “today” means “in God’s eternal now”. That is a tall order, but there are some indications that point in this direction.

Immediately after the two quotations in 1,5, the author refers to Jesus as the firstborn (πρωτότοκος; 1,6) and mentions the time when he is led into the world. The translation of this statement raises several difficulties,

11,9,35; 12,2a; 13,2. However, there are no clear examples of the participle referring to subsequent action (similarly, M. KIBBE, “Is It Finished? When Did It Start? Hebrews, Priesthood, and Atonement in Biblical, Systematic, and Historical Perspective”, *JTS* 65 [2014] 33).

the most important being the question of which world the author has in mind. Whatever world that may be, however, the firstborn is at some time led into some place. It appears that he is the firstborn when he is being led. His becoming the firstborn must therefore precede this entrance. If the entrance in question refers to his entrance into the heavenly world at his ascension, his birth must precede his ascension. True, it is possible that the term “firstborn” may be used in a wider sense, not presupposing actual birth (cf. Ps 88,28 LXX [ET 89,27]), but in a context that develops the idea of sonship, the connotations of birth lie very close at hand.

Indeed, the author proceeds to call attention to the Son’s eternal qualities. He insists that his eternal nature places him in a different category than the angels: his throne “is forever and ever” (1,8), and he “founded the earth” “in the beginning” (1,10). In contrast, the angels are created beings (1,7).

As the most important scriptural background for the entire epistle is Psalm 110, it may also be relevant that the Greek version of the psalm includes the words: “From the womb, before Morning-star, I brought you forth (ἐξεγέννησα)” (Ps 109,3 LXX [ET 110,3])¹⁴. One should not read too much into such poetic language, but it is possible that the author of Hebrews, who was so convinced of the Son’s eternal nature, would have been inspired by these words to think of the Son’s birth as preceding the creation of the world.

He may have thought of the Son’s birth along the same lines as in the metaphor of radiance which he used in v. 3. The term that I have here translated “radiance” (ἀπαύγασμα) may be understood either in an active or in a passive sense. If it is the former, the idea is that the Son radiates and actively brings forth the glory of God¹⁵. If it is taken in the passive sense, the Son reflects God’s glory like a mirror¹⁶. The term occurs only here in the NT, but both the active and the passive meaning are attested in other Jewish literature¹⁷. Context must therefore determine its meaning in Hebrews.

¹⁴ Ps 109,3 LXX (ET 110,3) was important to Christian apologetics from an early stage. When Justin Martyr quoted Ps 109,4 LXX (ET 110,4) to prove that the preexistent Christ willingly became incarnated, his quotation also included v. 3. Justin adds: “does this not declare to you that [He was] from of old, and that the God and Father of all things intended Him to be begotten by a human womb?” (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 63).

¹⁵ BRUCE, *Hebrews*, 48; LANE, *Hebrews* 1–8, 13; COCKERILL, *Hebrews*, 94.

¹⁶ SPICQ, *Hébreux*, 2.6-7. Some commentators are undecided or think the term may be intentionally ambiguous: e.g., G. KITTEL, ‘ἀυγάζω, ἀπαύγασμα’, *TDNT* 1:508; ATTRIDGE, *Hebrews*, 42; GRÄSSER, *Hebräer*, 60-61; ELLINGWORTH, *Hebrews*, 98-99; C.R. KOESTER, *Hebrews. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 36; New York 2001) 179-180; JOHNSON, *Hebrews*, 69.

¹⁷ Active: PHILO, *Opif.* 146; *Spec.* 4.123. Passive: PHILO, *Plant.* 50. Wis 7,26 is ambiguous.

An argument in favor of the passive meaning is that the term “imprint” (χαρακτήρ) suggests the image of an inert recipient. The argument in Hebrews, however, requires the active meaning: the Son radiates the glory of God. The purpose of the metaphor is to develop the idea that God has spoken in a superior way in his Son as compared to his revelation through the prophets. As the succeeding argument will show, this superiority specifically concerns the Son’s relationship to Moses (3,1-6). According to a well-known tradition, the glory of God was reflected from Moses’ face after he was given the ten commandments¹⁸. If the author were simply saying that the Son also functioned as a mirror of God’s glory, the metaphor would point to his equality with Moses, not his superiority. The author’s point, however, is that the Son falls in a different category than all other messengers of God. He is not a mere messenger; he is the very effulgence of God’s own glory. The following epithets point in the same direction: the Son is the embodiment of the exclusive characteristics of God; he is the sustainer of the universe; he is the one who takes away sin; and he exercises divine majesty.

If the metaphor of begetting complements that of radiance, the point would be that the Son relates to the Father like the rays that emanate from the sun. This metaphor does not imply that the Father existed before and without the Son, but that Father and Son are two distinguishable persons in the way that they relate to each other. Their relationship is also of an eternal character; they relate to each other eternally. As Father and Son, they are also equal with respect to their nature.

In the introduction to Hebrews, the metaphors of birth and radiance are also complemented by the idea of the Son as the Father’s imprint, providing an exact representation of him (1,3a). These metaphors are inspired by the idea of the Son as the embodiment of divine Wisdom and the agent of creation, while at the same time asserting both the unity of and the distinction between the Father and Son (1,3b).

If the metaphor of begetting is read as an integrated element of the introduction to the epistle, it must be understood as yet another metaphor illustrating the eternal relationship between Jesus and his heavenly Father. At least some of the earliest readers of the epistle found it natural to read the metaphor precisely in this way. In his explanation of the doctrine of the Son’s eternal begetting, the church father Athanasius relied heavily on the introduction to Hebrews: “What is the Offspring of the Father’s

¹⁸ Based on Exod 34,29-35; see also 2 Cor 3,7; PHILO, *On the Life of Moses* 2.70; *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* Exod 34,29. See further L.L. BELLEVILLE, *Reflections of Glory*. Paul’s Polemical Use of the Moses-Doxa Tradition in 2 Corinthians 3.1-18 (JSNTSup 52; Sheffield 1991) 24-79.

essence [is] the Son [...] the same is the Wisdom and Word of the Father, in and through whom He creates and makes all things; and His Brightness too, in whom He enlightens all things, and is revealed to whom He wills; and His Expression and Image also, in whom He is contemplated and known, wherefore ‘He and His Father are one’” (*Against the Arians* 1.16).

Athanasius’s point was directed against the Arians, who argued that the Son could not be eternal and of the same nature as the Father because he was born of the Father. In response, Athanasius maintained that what is begotten of the Father is of the same essence as the Father. To him and many other early church fathers, the doctrine of the Son’s eternal begetting proved to be important for their understanding of Christology. It served to explain the self-differentiation within the Trinity as well as the equality of the Father and the Son ¹⁹.

Even though there is no explicit doctrine of the Son’s eternal generation in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the idea is congenial with the argument of the epistle. It remains the most plausible interpretation of the quoted words, “today I have begotten you” (Heb 1:5a).

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SUMMARY

This article discusses the quotation of Ps 2,7 in Heb 1,5 with a focus on the phrase, “today I have begotten you”. Patristic interpreters found in this expression a description of the Father’s eternal begetting of the Son. Modern scholars have generally rejected this interpretation and instead suggested that the word “today” may refer to Jesus’ resurrection, to his ascension, or to the eschatological “now”. This article takes a fresh look at the various suggestions and argues that the reference to the eternal generation of the Son is the one that is most compatible with the argument in the epistle.

¹⁹ For a primer on the doctrine of the eternal begetting of the Son, see K. GILES, *The Eternal Generation of the Son*. Maintaining Orthodoxy in Trinitarian Theology (Downers Grove, IL 2012).

ANGELS AS LETTER COURIERS IN REV 1,4 – 3,22? THE SYMBOLISM OF ROYAL LETTERS

“So in all this very broad discussion there is no reference to its rules, even if there is research on the most obscure things”¹. This is how Augustine of Hippo listed the seven angels of Revelation 1–3, which he considered one of the best-known *crux interpretum* of Sacred Scripture. In the tangle of available hypotheses that have been put forward regarding the angels in Revelation 1–3, there are a number of widely accepted elements which we will not consider in this essay. While the letters for the seven churches have a symbolic value, they bear a historical significance for the province of Asia to which they refer². The language, style and symbolic universe of the section do not belong to a different source, but are an integral part of the writing they introduce³. Mentioned nine times in Rev 1,4 – 3,22, the angels display characteristic traits that distinguish them from those mentioned in the rest of Revelation, with perhaps the exception of Rev 22,16, to which we will return below.

We intend to focus on the symbolic meaning the angels have for the seven churches according to the letter delivery system under Domitian. After briefly recalling the history of interpretation, we will proceed as follows: the epistolary symbolism in Revelation 1–3, the royal letters and the imperial courier, the legal districts of Asia, the functions of the secretary and the letter courier, and an outline of the seven letters.

I. THE CURRENT DEBATE

The angels in Rev 1,4 – 3,22 have been the subject of an ongoing debate because, as the interpreters of Revelation themselves recognize, any positive

¹ AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *De doct. chr.* 3,30,42 (PL 34,81): “In qua copiosissima disputatione nihil istarum est regularum, et utique res illic obscurissima quaeritur”.

² W.M. RAMSAY, *The Letters to the Seven Churches* (London 1904); C.J. HEMER, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting* (JSNT SS 11; Sheffield 1989). There have been investigations of the historical-geographical roots of Revelation, especially by P. PRIGENT, *L'Apocalypse de Saint Jean* (CNT 14; Lausanne – Paris 1981). The quest for understanding the historical context of the seven letters has followed the numerous epigraphic discoveries in Asia Minor.

³ D.E. AUNE, “The Form and Function of the Proclamations to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2–3)”, *NTS* 36 (1990) 182–204, here 182; M. STOWASSER, “Die Sendschreiben der Offenbarung des Johannes: Literarische Gestaltung – Buchkompositorische Funktion – Textpragmatik”, *NTS* 61 (2015) 50–66.

aspect that may emerge from a proposal produces several objections ⁴. Let us briefly survey the pros and cons of these interpretations ⁵.

(1) Seven heavenly beings. According to the most natural hypothesis, the seven angels are heavenly beings, or supernatural messengers ⁶. To support this claim, Revelation consistently presents angels as supernatural beings. Against this hypothesis, Jesus Christ relies on John of Patmos, i.e. a man, and does not address the angels directly. Additionally, as the letters contain various admonishments, it is difficult to imagine that the angels to whom the letters are addressed are being called to conversion.

(2) Seven human beings. The contrary hypothesis considers the ἄγγελοι in Rev 1,4 – 3,22 to be seven human beings, namely the overseers (*episkopoi*) of the churches or, alternatively, the prophets and teachers of the communities ⁷. A variant of this anthropological claim considers the angels as readers in the churches along the lines of those who held a similar role in synagogues ⁸. Supporting this claim, it would indeed appear, at first glance, that the angels were somehow associated with the churches that are named. To counter this claim, it should be observed that no human person is referred to as ἄγγελος in Revelation. Additionally, for those who sustain that the angels are *episkopoi* ⁹, it should be recalled that the term ἐπίσκοπος ¹⁰ is wholly absent in Revelation, while the term “priests for God” (Rev 1,6) appears right from the outset. Nor is it ever mentioned that each recipient reads the letter to the church gathered in assembly.

(3) Seven angels, that is, seven churches. As mentioned in the introduction, Augustine of Hippo mentioned that Ticonius came to the conclusion that “by the angels themselves must be understood the churches” ¹¹. In support of this claim, David Aune argued that since in Rev 1,11 angels are not mentioned and that later the Spirit speaks to the churches (Rev 2,1.7), it can be surmised that the angel is identified with the church ¹². Besides the fact that this hypothesis depends on a weak argument from silence, a

⁴ G. BIGUZZI, *Apocalisse*. Nuova versione, introduzione e commento (LB NT 20; Milan 2005) 96.

⁵ E. FERGUSON, “Angels of the Churches in Revelation 1–3. *Status quaestionis* and Another Proposal”, *BBR* 21 (2011) 271–386.

⁶ J. ROLOFF, *Revelation*. A Continental Commentary (Minneapolis, MN 1993) 39.

⁷ E. SCHUSSLER FIORENZA, *Revelation*. Vision of a Just World (Minneapolis, MN 1991) 52–53. See also B.C. BUCUR, “Hierarchy, Prophecy, and the Angelomorphic Spirit: A Contribution to the Study of Revelation’s Wirkungsgeschichte”, *JBL* 127 (2008) 173–194.

⁸ FERGUSON, “Angels of the Churches”, 383–384.

⁹ F. MANNS, “L’evêque, ange de l’Église”, *EL* 104 (1990) 176–181.

¹⁰ See the use of ἐπίσκοπος in Phil 1,1; 1 Tim 3,2; Titus 1,7; Acts 20,28; 1 Pet 2,25, where the term is never associated with the monarchical episcopate.

¹¹ AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *De doct. chr.* 3,30,42.

¹² D.E. AUNE, *Revelation* (WBC 52; Dallas, TX 1997) 109. See also E. LOHSE, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (NTD 11; Göttingen ¹⁰1988) 23–24.

further obstacle is that the churches are never identified with angels. From the evidence of Rev 1,11, where angels are not mentioned, it is not legitimate to conclude that angels are to be identified with individual churches. Besides the reference to the angel in the prologue (Rev 1,1), angels are subsequently mentioned in the passage introducing the letters (see Rev 1,20), that is, after and not before the programmatic passage of Rev 1,11.

(4) Seven angels (transcendence) for seven churches (space-time). Ugo Vanni applies these categories in reference to the church in its earthly and transcendent reality¹³. This interpretation solves various riddles regarding the *crux interpretum*: for example, the risk of a tautology between the seven stars and the seven lampstands. While at present this is perhaps the most widely shared hypothesis among scholars¹⁴, it should nevertheless be pointed out that this claim, too, has caused doubts. Due to the correspondence between the transcendent and the historical reality of the church, we are forced to identify the angels with the overseers (*episkopoi*), an assimilation which, as we have noted, finds no correspondence in Revelation. Even the distinction between the earthly church and its transcendent reality, represented by the angels, appears subsequent to Revelation.

(5) Seven heavenly angels with authority over the seven churches. According to the powers granted to court officials in antiquity, the angels of the seven churches could be likened to church superintendents¹⁵. This claim is hardly convincing because in Revelation it is never said that the angels of the seven churches exercise power over them. This should apply both to the anthropological hypothesis and the supernatural one, where the angels are likened to superintendents.

Therefore, the principal hypotheses we have surveyed, while clarifying some aspects, have raised questions that lessen their plausibility. Perhaps, ancient epistolography can come to our aid in shedding new light on the matter.

II. EPISTOLARY SYMBOLS IN REV 1,4 – 3,22

In our opinion, epistolary symbolism in Rev 1,4 – 3,22 comprises three parts:

¹³ U. VANNI, *Apocalisse di Giovanni*. Introduzione generale e commento (Assisi 2018) 105-106.

¹⁴ C. DOGLIO, *Apocalisse*. Introduzione, traduzione e commento (Cinisello Balsamo 2012) 47; M. KARRER, *Johannesoffenbarung*. Teil 1. Offb. 1,1 – 5,14 (EKK 24/1; Göttingen 2017) 286-287; E. LUPIERI, *L'apocalisse di Giovanni* (Milan 2009) 120.

¹⁵ BIGUZZI, *Apocalisse*, 98.

- 1) The epistolary prologue (1,4-8);
- 2) The topics of the epistolary apousia/parousia (1,9-20);
- 3) The letters for the seven churches (2,1 – 3,22).

In the introductory protocol, the author of Revelation follows the well-established pattern of proto-Christian epistolography¹⁶. The protocol comprises the prologue (vv. 4-5a), with the *superscriptio* (John, v. 4a), the *adscriptio* (the seven churches, v. 4b), the *salutatio* (vv. 4c-5a), and the doxology (vv. 5b-6). The epistolary model closest to the prologue in Rev 1,4-8 is found in the letter to the Galatians, chiefly because of the inclusion of the Christological faith fragment and the doxology in Gal 1,4-5 and Rev 1,4-6¹⁷. The principal originality in the prologue concerns the prophetic announcement (vv. 7-8), with the scriptural echoes of Dan 7,13, Isa 40,5 and Zech 12,1-4.

The opening vision then follows: John listens and sees one who is like a son of man who commands him to write a letter (βιβλίον) to be sent to the seven churches (Rev 1,9-20). Despite some reservations, the section Rev 1,4 – 3,22 should be labelled as the “seven letters” because the expression in Rev 1,11 is a synecdoche where the part and the singular (scroll) indicate the whole and the plural (the letters)¹⁸. At the same time, Rev 1,11 assumes a programmatic function with respect to Rev 2,1 – 3,22. The churches that will be treated individually later are listed with a merism¹⁹. A peculiar trait of this opening vision is the so-called epistolary “absence/presence” or implicit “apousia/parousia” that the Lord exercises over the addressees²⁰. He was absent because of his death but now he is alive because of his resurrection (Rev 1,18). The vision defines the epistolary

¹⁶ See A. PITTA (coll. F. FILANNINO – A. LANDI), *Sinossi paolina bilingue* (Cinisello Balsamo 2013) for a comparison with the pattern found in the Pauline letters.

¹⁷ For Paulinism in Revelation, after years of silence, see P. MISSERE, “Paolinismo in Apocalisse? Sulle tracce dell’eredità paolina nell’opera di Giovanni di Patmos”, *RivB* 67 (2019) 543-568.

¹⁸ For the widespread translation of βιβλίον with “book” in Rev 1,11, see C. MANUNZA, *L’Apocalisse come “actio liturgica” cristiana*. Studio esegetico-teologico di Ap 1,9-16; 3,14-22; 13,9-10; 19,1-8 (AnB 199; Roma 2012) 98-103.

¹⁹ Because of the reference to the “son of man”, T.B. SLATER, *Christ and Community*. A Social-Historical Study of the Christology of Revelation (JSNT SS 178; Sheffield 1999) 110, considers Rev 1,13-14 as the “superscription” for Rev 2,1 – 3,22. The hypothesis is improbable because this function is fulfilled by Rev 1,11 which introduces, by recapitulation, the following letters.

²⁰ On apousia/parousia in ancient epistolography, see the pioneering contributions of H. KOSKENNIEMI, *Studien zur Idee und Phraseologie des griechischen Briefes bis 400 n. Chr.* (Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae B.102; Helsinki 1956), and R.W. FUNK, “The Apostolic Parousia: Form and Significance”, *Christian History and Interpretation*. Studies Presented to John Knox (eds. W.R. FARMER – C.F.D. MOULE – R.R. NIEBUHR) (Cambridge 1967) 249-268.

symbolism by locating it in the cultic environment of the Lord's Day (Rev 1,10) and in the apocalyptic context of vision and revelation (Rev 1,13). Since one of the peculiar characteristics of ancient epistolography is, as Cicero maintained, "to inform the absent of what is important that they know in our own and in their own interest" (*Letters to the Family* 2,4,1), the topics of absence/presence in Rev 1,9-20 are functional to worship and revelation ²¹. In other words, John of Patmos chooses epistolary symbolism to underline a double absence/presence: that of the Risen One among the churches to which the letters are addressed, and that of himself who, although exiled, is nevertheless in communion with other believers in Christ (Rev 1,9).

Finally, the subsection dedicated to each letter (Rev 2,1 – 3,22) develops the epistolary symbolism introduced in the initial and defining vision in Rev 1,9-20. At a later point in the essay, we will take a closer look at the interaction between the epistolary interlocutors. With regard to genre, the three parts of the section bring to mind epistolary royal edicts ²². These edicts (πρόσταγμα or διάταγμα), transmitted in epistolary form, were the most common way in which emperors governed the provinces ²³. The royal edict in epistolary form was generally addressed to cities, provinces or even to the whole empire, and was often introduced abruptly by the formula τάδε λέγει ὁ βασιλεύς or "Imperator dicit" or similar expressions, to which we will return below. For this reason, the protagonist is presented from the outset as "the Ruler of the kings of the earth" (Rev 1,5) and the believers are his kingdom (Rev 1,6). John himself is in Patmos because of the tribulation, the kingdom and perseverance that are in Christ (Rev 1,9). As a form of inclusion, the royal symbol of the throne opens (Rev 1,4) and closes the section (3,21). The winner will sit with the Ruler of kings on his throne and on the throne of his father (Rev 3,21).

The epistolary symbolism thus runs through Rev 1,4 – 3,22 and it serves the apocalyptic genre introduced in the prologue (Rev 1,1-3) ²⁴ and evident

²¹ J.P. DE GIORGIO, "Absence et présence dans le lettres d'exile de Cicéron", in *Interférences. Ars Scribendi* 8 (2015) 1-17.

²² Thus, among others, AUNE, "The Seven Churches", 183

²³ P. CECCARELLI, "Letters and Decrees: Diplomatic Protocols in the Hellenistic Period", *Ancient Greek Letter Writing. A Cultural History (600 BC-150 BC)* (ed. P. CECCARELLI) (Oxford 2013) 147-183; S. CORCORAN, "State Correspondence in the Roman Empire: Imperial Communication from Augustus to Justinian", *State Correspondence in the Ancient World. From New Kingdom Egypt to the Roman Empire* (ed. K. RADNER) (Oxford 2014) 171-209.

²⁴ On the relationship between the letters and the apocalyptic genre in Revelation 2-3, see T. NICKLAS, "Diesseits aus der Sicht des Jenseits: Die Sendschreiben der Offenbarung des Johannes (Offb 2-3)", *Other Worlds and their Relation to this World. Early Jewish and Ancient Christian Traditions* (eds. T. NICKLAS – J. VERHEYDEN – E.M.M. EINYKEL – F. GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ) (JSJ 143; Leiden 2010) 247-280.

also in the cultic context of the presence in absence of the Risen One within the community of believers (Rev 1,9-20). The epistolary instrument and style are essential to interpret the section. Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that in the ancient world epistolography was not treated as a literary genre in its own right, in the modern sense of the term, but as an instrument and style of communication at the service of many other genres, including royal diplomacy, apocalyptic literature and worship ²⁵.

III. ROYAL LETTERS AND LETTER COURIERS

Letter couriers are named in different ways in Greek literature, including the LXX and NT ²⁶: τρέχοντες (2 Chr 30,6.10), ὄμηρος (Isa 18,2), πρεσβευτής (1 Macc 14,21.22.40; 15,17), πρεσβεύω (2 Cor 5,20; Eph 6,20), πρέσβυς (Isa 39,1), βιβλιαφόρος (Esth 3,13; 8,10), γραμματοφόρος ²⁷, κήρυξ (1 Tim 2,7; 2 Tim 1,11) and, of course, ἄγγελος (1 Macc 1,44) ²⁸. The courier played a decisive role in the success or failure of a letter ²⁹. In one of his letters, Cicero confessed that he was late in replying to Atticus because he could not find a trustworthy courier and added: “It is difficult to find a trustworthy courier. How few of these gentry are able to convey a letter rather weightier than usual without lightening it by skimming its contents!” (*Ad Att.* 1,13,1).

The service provided by the courier was decisive for royal correspondence, since the outcome of peace or war between entire populations often depended on his performance. Thucydides recounts that the *strategos* Nicias, “[f]earing lest his messengers (ἐν τῷ ἀγγέλῳ), either from inability to speak or from want of intelligence, or because they desired to please the people, might not tell the whole truth, he wrote a letter, that the Athenians might receive his own opinion of their affairs unimpaired in the transmission, and so be better able to judge of the real facts of the case” (*Hist.* 7,8,2). To ensure unimpaired delivery of letters, the Persians

²⁵ Pace M. KARRER, *Die Johannesoffenbarung als Brief*. Studien zu ihrem literarischen, historischen und theologischen Ort (FRLANT 40; Göttingen 1986), and those who include Revelation in the epistolographic genre.

²⁶ L. DOERING, *Ancient Jewish Letters and the Beginning of Christian Epistolography* (WUNT 298; Tübingen 2012) 133.

²⁷ PLUTARCH, *Precepts of Statecraft* 799E; POLYBIUS, *Hist.* 1,79,14; 5,101,6; 5,102,8; 27,4,1.

²⁸ See also 2 Kgs 10,8; THUCYDIDES, *Hist.* 7,8,2; PLUTARCH, *Life of Dione* 26,5,3.

²⁹ B.-J. SCHRÖDER, “Couriers and Conventions in Cicero’s Epistolary Network”, P. CECCARELLI (ed.), *Ancient Greek Letter Writing*, 81-100; S. CORBINELLI, *Amicorum colloquia absentium*. La Scrittura epistolare a Roma tra comunicazione quotidiana e genere letterario (Napoli 2008).

began to employ letter couriers ³⁰. Diodorus Siculus reported that Antigonos Monophthalmus had already installed a human chain of *bibliaphoroi* in 315 BCE to facilitate his control over Asia (*Hist. Lib.* 19,57,5).

With the advent of the Principate, Caesar Augustus reformed and perfected the *cursus publicus* for letter couriers (Suetonius, *Aug.* 49,9) ³¹. The *cursus publicus* served the emperor and the proconsuls of the provinces by using the *capita viarum* or the main communication routes of the empire ³². However, only the princes and imperial authorities (viz., proconsuls and magistrates) could use the *cursus publicus* to have letters delivered ³³. On the other hand, Pliny the Younger recalled the high price of the *tabellarii* (*Ep.* 3,17,2; 7,12,6). Between the first and second centuries, the *cursus publicus* system had progressed so much that it deserved the excessive praise given to it by Aelius Aristides (second century CE):

“Therefore, he [the King] has no need to wear himself out by travelling around the whole empire, nor, by appearing in person, now among some, now among others, to make sure of each detail when he has the time to tread their soil. It is easy for him to stay where he is and manage the entire civilized world by letters (δι’ ἐπιστολῶν), which arrive almost as soon as they are written, as if they were carried by winged envoys (πτηνῶν)” ³⁴.

The comment by Aelius Aristides, who lived in Smyrna, while prone to some exaggeration, does indeed capture one of the best attested facts about the system, which allowed rulers to govern faraway provinces by epistolary communication. Significant in this light is Aristides’ metaphor of letter couriers as winged beings: the couriers delivered royal letters with the speed of birds. It is no coincidence that apocalyptic literature preferred the eagle to symbolise the epistolary courier who carried letters to their destination swiftly and surely (2 *Baruch* 78–86; 4 *Baruch* 7,1–13) ³⁵. For this reason the eagle, mentioned in Rev 8,13, expressed, among other things,

³⁰ HERODOTUS, *Hist.* 8,98,1–2.

³¹ For the *cursus publicus* during the Principate, see A. SARRI, *Material Aspects of Letter Writing in the Graeco-Roman World. 500 BC–AD 200* (Berlin 2010) 12–14.

³² CORCORAN, “State Correspondence”, 202–203.

³³ A. KOLB, “Transport and Communication in the Roman State: The *cursus publicus*”, *Travel and Geography in the Roman Empire* (eds. C. ADAMS – R. LAURENCE) (London – New York 2001) 95–104.

³⁴ AELIUS ARISTIDES, *Or.* 26,32–33. For the original Greek and translation, see J.H. OLIVER, *The Ruling Power. A Study of the Roman Empire in the Second Century after Christ through the Roman Orations of Aelius Aristides* (Philadelphia, PA 1953) 985.

³⁵ On the eagle as a symbol of the imperial courier, see L. DOERING, “Configuring Addressee Communities in Ancient Jewish Letters. The Case of the Epistle of Baruch (2 *Baruch* 78–86)”, *Letters and Communities. Studies in the Socio-Political Dimensions of Ancient Epistolography* (eds. P. CECCARELLI – L. DOERING – T. FÖGEN – I. GILDENHARD) (Oxford 2018) 271–272.

the speed with which messages reached their recipients and the sense of urgency conveyed along with the letter (Rev 8,13).

For the epistolary symbolism in Rev 1,4 – 3,22, we would like to recall three royal letters known to ancient Judaism. During his reign, Hezekiah and his princes sent a letter to all Israel and Judah, including the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem (2 Chr 30,1-6). This is followed by an account of the contents of the letter (2 Chr 30,7b-9), the sending of the messengers, and the outcome of the letter (2 Chr 30,10-14).

The book of Esther tells of the two letters sent by Artaxerxes to the Jews of his kingdom (fifth century BCE). The first letter (Esth 3,13a-15) was a decree that called for the persecution of the Jews. The letters were sent by couriers (διὰ βιβλιαφόρων) into all provinces under Artaxerxes (Esth 3,13), starting from the city of Susa (Esth 3,15 LXX). After the intervention of Queen Esther, Artaxerxes himself summoned the secretaries and rewrote the letters in favour of the Jews, and had them delivered again by letter couriers (διὰ βιβλιαφόρων, Esth 8,9-10 LXX).

The final royal letter well known in the Jewish milieu of the third to second centuries BCE was from Antiochus IV Epiphanes, as reported in 1 Macc 1,41-53: “The king sent letters (βιβλία) by messengers (ἐν χειρὶ ἀγγέλων) to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah ordering them to follow the foreign laws of the country” (v. 44). These letters of Antiochus IV shed light on the role of both the messenger and the epistolary communication in Rev 1,4 – 3,22. In both circumstances, kings (Antiochus IV; the Ruler of kings) had sent one or more letters to be delivered by couriers to the capital of a province (Jerusalem/Ephesus) and to the cities located at the borders (Judea and Asia). Although 1 Macc 1,41-53 does not reveal the content of the letters, the task of the messengers was to announce that Jewish Law was to be repealed and replaced by idolatry. Not incidentally, sacrifices to idols are mentioned in the letters to the church in Pergamon (Rev 2,14) and Thyatira (Rev 2,20). The order to violate the law by commanding sacrifices to be made to pagan idols, promulgated by Antiochus IV, contrasts with the condemnation of those who succumbed to idolatry in Rev 2,14.20.

The *cursus publicus* system that was well established by the end of the first century CE required that couriers leave the imperial residences (Susa, Jerusalem and Ephesus) for the other cities or provinces of the empire to communicate the edicts. A remarkable difference can be observed between the emperors (from Caesar Augustus to Domitian) who used the *cursus publicus* to govern their provinces and the Ruler of kings who sent out his couriers to the churches of Asia. Because of their status, the first Christian

communities of the latter part of the first century could not avail themselves of a *cursus publicus* ³⁶. It was only in a vision, like the one occurring in Patmos, that John could imagine the Ruler of kings relying on couriers to deliver edicts to his churches.

Revelation 1,4 – 3,22 thus imagines the Roman road system being used by the Ruler of kings to govern relations with the churches convened in the principal districts of Asia. Without the letter courier, the prince could not govern his provinces and, according to the vision, the Ruler of kings could not deliver his decrees to his churches by means of the seven angelic couriers and the sevenfold Spirit.

IV. THE LEGAL DISTRICTS OF ASIA

Asia is the Roman province of which the largest amount of information has come down to us ³⁷. We know a great deal about Roman Asia's various districts and the road network that spread around the Augustan Sebaste Way (completed in 6 BCE) ³⁸. In our opinion, the most authoritative accounts of the districts coming under the jurisdiction of Asia at the end of the first century CE are by Pliny the Elder and Flavius Josephus. Pliny drew information from the list of provinces compiled under Augustus, with most of the names corroborated by epigraphic evidence. As for the cities mentioned in Revelation, the events narrated in Pliny's *History* are supported by the discoveries that were made in the province ³⁹, namely the letter of an officer to the districts of Asia (51-50 or 29 BCE ca.) ⁴⁰; the *Monumentum Ephesenum* ⁴¹; the inscription from

³⁶ E.J. EPP, "New Testament Papyrus Manuscripts and Letter Carrying in Greco-Roman Times", *Perspectives on New Testament Textual Criticism*. Collected Essays, 1962-2004 (Sup.NT 116; Leiden 2005) 383-409.

³⁷ I am grateful to Y. DEMIRCI, "Le città dell'Apocalisse alla luce del *Monumentum Ephesenum*" (2011) on the comparison between the cities of the Apocalypse and the above mentioned statements. I hope that Demirci's contribution will be published soon and will receive the attention it deserves.

³⁸ See S. MITCHELL, "The Administration of Roman Asia from 133 BC to AD 250", *Lokale Autonomie und römische Ordnungsmacht in den kaiserzeitlichen Provinzen vom 1. bis ins 3. Jh.* (ed. W. ECK) (München 1999) 17-46; D.H. FRENCH, "The Roman Road-System", *ANRW* II.7.2 (1980) 698-729.

³⁹ MITCHELL, "The Administration of Roman Asia", 23.

⁴⁰ For the original inscription in Greek, see R. SHERK, *Roman Documents from the Greek East. Senatus Consulta and Epistolae to the Age of Augustus* (Baltimore, MD 1969) 272-273. For the translation, see IDEM, *Rome and the Greek East to the Death of Augustus* (Cambridge 1984) 96-97.

⁴¹ For the original text of *Monumentum Ephesenum*, see M. COTTIER, et al., *The Customs Law of Asia* (Oxford 2008). DEMIRCI, "Le città dell'Apocalisse", mentions the districts of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamon, Sardis and Cibyra whose capital was Laodicea.

Didyma (nr. 148) ⁴²; and the epigraph *IvEph* nr. 13 (between 70 and 96 AD) ⁴³.

The legal districts mentioned by Pliny are the following: Ephesus; Smyrna, with Magnesia (*Nat. Hist.* 5,31,120); Pergamon, including Thyatira (*Nat. Hist.* 5,33,126); Sardis, to which Philadelphia belonged (*Nat. Hist.* 5,30,111); and Laodicea, which was associated with Hierapolis (*Nat. Hist.* 5,29,105). Pliny's list of the region's principal districts show that by the second half of the first century CE Ephesus had gained prominence in the area at the expense of Pergamon. It should additionally be observed that the dependence of Thyatira on Pergamon and that of Philadelphia on Sardis are not coincidental. This evidence corresponds to the order of Revelation, where the churches of Pergamon (Rev 2,12-17), Thyatira (Rev 2,18-29), Sardis (Rev 3,1-6) and Philadelphia (Rev 3,7-13) are cited in sequence. The same is true outside of Revelation regarding the dependence of Hierapolis and Colossae on Laodicea (Col 4,13-15). Therefore, even if at the end of the first century CE Thyatira was yet to become an autonomous district (it became one at the beginning of the third century), its dependence on Pergamon was sufficient for it to be mentioned among the churches of Asia. If in the second century CE Aelius Aristides was involved in a legal dispute in Philadelphia ⁴⁴, it meant the city had become increasingly important as a regional assize.

Despite criticism for his pro-imperial leaning ⁴⁵, Flavius Josephus provides information on the decrees that were issued in favour of the Jews in several districts of Asia: the decrees by Lucius Lentulus for the Jews of Ephesus (*Ant.* 14,234, 236-240) and Pergamon (*Ant.* 14,247-255) ⁴⁶; by Lucius Antonius for the Jews of Sardis (*Ant.* 14,235), and by the magistrates to the proconsul Gaius Rabirius for the Jews of Laodicea (*Ant.* 14,241-243). If according to the *Smyrna Inscription* nr. 697 it is stated that a group of Jews participated in public works, with a donation of 10,000 drachmas, it meant that the Jews were well-integrated in the city. The allusions to the synagogue of Satan for the churches of Smyrna (Rev 2,9) and Philadelphia (Rev 3,9), and to those members of the church in Thyatira who

⁴² Regarding the Didyma inscription (40-49 AD), see L. ROBERT, "Le culte de Caligula à Milet et la Province d'Asie", *Hellenica* 7 (1959) 206-238. The Didyma inscription mentions, among others, the districts of Pergamon, Sardis, Ephesus, and Laodicea.

⁴³ On the Ephesus inscription nr. 13, see C. HABICHT, "New Evidence on the Province of Asia", *JRS* 65 (1971) 64-91. Of the cities in Revelation, the inscription mentions Pergamon, Smyrna and Sardis.

⁴⁴ AELIUS ARISTIDES, *Or.* 50, 96,98.

⁴⁵ J.M.G. BARCLAY, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora from Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE-117 CE)* (Edinburgh 1998) 249-269.

⁴⁶ On the Jews at Pergamon, see CICERO, *Pro Flac.* 28,68.

were for or against Gezabel and Satan's deep secrets (Rev 2,18-25) ⁴⁷, are an indication of the relations local residents had with the Jews of their respective cities ⁴⁸.

The information acquired from the sources cited above shows that the cities in the seven letters are not mentioned randomly. Far from it. Rather, they indicated districts in Asia where the Jewish presence was well established and where the early Christian communities sought the best *modus vivendi* to survive in the Diaspora. Due to the principal districts (Ephesus, Pergamon, Smyrna, Sardis and Laodicea) and the dependent districts (Thyatira and Philadelphia), John's symbolic knowledge develops along a direct route — not a circular route from Ephesus to Laodicea ⁴⁹ but, rather, a direct one from Ephesus to the different district cities where the churches were assembled. The important publication edited by David H. French on the milestones of Asia provides an overview of the extensive road network that, under Domitian ⁵⁰, branched out from Ephesus, *caput viae*, to the cities of the province. In turn, Strabo's description of Ephesus as a *caput viae* also seems to correspond to the milestones found in Asia: "Since there is a kind of common road constantly used by all who travel from Ephesus towards the east, Artemidorus traverses this too. From Ephesus to Carura, a boundary of Caria towards Phrygia, through Magnesia, Tralleis, Nysa, and Antiocheia, is a journey of seven hundred and forty stadia; and, from Carura, the journey in Phrygia, through Laodiceia, Apameia, Metropolis and Chelidonia" (*Geog.* 14,2,29) ⁵¹.

Therefore, the symbolic epistolary messengers in Rev 1,9 – 3,22 fit well in the context of the legal districts of Asia, the *capita viarum*, the secondary roads and the resident Jewish communities. Whether the coexistence of Jewish and mixed Christian communities was a reason for open and permanent conflict remains, in our opinion, an open question ⁵². With these elements in mind, let us now return to Revelation and focus on the role of the secretary and the courier.

⁴⁷ See also *CII* II. 752, where mention is made of a *sambatheion*, an alternative name for the synagogue at Thyatira.

⁴⁸ See P. TREBILCO, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (SNTS MS 69; Cambridge 1991); R.S. ASCHOUGH (ed.), *Religious Rivalries and the Struggle for Success in Sardis and Smyrna* (ESCJ 14; Waterloo 2005).

⁴⁹ The hypothesis of the circular route of the churches in Revelation was put forward long ago by RAMSAY, *The Letters to the Seven Churches*.

⁵⁰ D.H. FRENCH, *Roman Roads and Milestones of Asia Minor* (Vol. 3, Milestones, Fasc. 3.5 Asia; Ankara 2014).

⁵¹ See also STRABO, *Geog.* 14,1,2, for the distance between Ephesus and Izmir; 13,4,4, for the distance between Sardis and Thyatira.

⁵² See ASCHOUGH (ed.), *Religious Rivalries*, with discussion of scholars for and against the conflicts of Jewish communities with the urban environment in Asia Minor.

V. THE EPISTOLARY SECRETARY

One of the most misleading assumptions regarding the function of angels in Rev 1,4 – 3,22 concerns the epistolary *adscriptio* that introduces each letter⁵³. The interpretation is influenced by the assumption that every angel should be, in some way, involved in the church to which he may belong. In reality, John of Patmos is well acquainted with the epistolary protocol with which he complies from the outset: “John to the seven churches that are in Asia, grace to you and peace” (Rev 1,4).

By contrast, the formula which introduces the single letters takes up the previous order that the Ruler addresses to the seer: “Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches” (Rev 1,11). The request is decisive for identifying the function of the courier in Rev 2,1 and par., because it shows that the assertions do not concern the contents of each letter, but the prior phase of the order given to the secretary⁵⁴. To give greater authority to his own vision, John in Rev 2,1 – 3,22 acts as a secretary who writes, under dictation, what the Ruler orders him to do; consequently the Ruler is entirely responsible for the contents of these edicts in epistolary form.

However, the formula in Rev 2,1 and par. not only repeats the information given in Rev 1,11 but also adds what any reader is expected to know. How can the letters be transmitted to the seven churches if John is exiled in Patmos? The most natural answer is provided by the citation regarding the courier that is repeated every time in the extra-epistolary formula. In practice, while in the prologue (Rev 1,4-8) John is the sender of the letter, from the vision in Rev 1,9-20 onwards he acts as a secretary. The symbolic shift is due to the authority that John wants to confer on his writing. Only in an instrumental way is he the author of the letters; the ultimate author is the Risen One who communicates with his churches⁵⁵.

Starting from Rev 2,1a and par., the courier plays the decisive role in delivering each letter to its destination⁵⁶. The passage between ἄγγελος and ἐκκλησία outside the letter section is illuminating. The binomial

⁵³ Thus K. BERGER, “Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament”, *ANRW* II.25.2, 1353-1354, who catalogues the passages of Rev 2,1 and par. as “apostolikon”.

⁵⁴ On the role of secretary, see E. RICHARDS, *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* (WUNT II/42; Tübingen 1991); IDEM, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing. Secretaries, Composition and Collection* (Downers Grove, IL 2004).

⁵⁵ See AUNE, “The Seven Churches”, 187, with several parallels from Jewish and Greco-Roman apocalyptic literature.

⁵⁶ About the secretary and the courier in the ancient world, see L.H. BLUMELL, “The Message and the Medium: Some Observations on Epistolary Communication in Late Antiquity”, *JGRChJ* 10 (2014) 24-67, here 26-27.

pair reappears only at the end where the Risen One reveals: “I, Jesus, have sent (ἔπεμψα) my angel (ἄγγελον) to give you this testimony for the churches” (Rev 22,16). The assertion is parallel to the beginning of the so-called “epistolary closure” (Rev 22,6-21) where God himself “sent his angel to show his servants the things that must happen soon”. Thus, the angel sent by Jesus to the churches does not identify himself with the church, let alone with one of its parts or a representative of it. Rather, the angel is like the courier sent by the Ruler to the province of Asia. The correspondence between Rev 1,20 – 2,1a and 22,6.16 should not be underestimated because in the first case there are seven angels, while on the other occasions only one angel is mentioned. The same symbolic dynamic occurs with regard to the sevenfold Spirit (Rev 1,4).

The hypothesis is confirmed by the hyperbaton that introduces the letters in Rev 2,1 and parallels: Τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Ἐφέσῳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον. Hermogenes of Tarsus explains hyperbaton as follows: “Modern writers think that hyperbaton is an exchange of expression and period of the ornamental kind, but they do not understand what a hyperbaton is. An hyperbaton is not just an ornamental figure, but a necessary one: It occurs when a speaker puts in the middle (of a sentence) the reason why he is saying something — something the listener wants” (*Peri methodou deinothētos*, 429-430).

Against those who consider it to be merely a stylistic ornament, Hermogenes well illustrates the effect of hyperbaton on content. In the case of Rev 2,1 – 3,14, the hyperbaton focuses on the location of the church, to which each letter is delivered, and not on the angel who may belong to the church. The issue here is, literally, “the church in Ephesus” (Rev 2,1) and not the angel who may belong to it. Therefore, John resorts every time to hyperbaton not as a simple stylistic variation, but as a means to emphasize the totality of the “churches” and their relationship to the symbolic districts of Asia⁵⁷. The parallel ecclesial localizations without hyperbatons support our hypothesis. In the prologue, John addresses himself “to the seven churches that are in Asia” (Rev 1,4). At the beginning of the vision, he is commanded to write and send the letter to the seven churches that are in Ephesus and the other cities of Asia (Rev 1,11)⁵⁸. Thus, if there is no

⁵⁷ To avoid hyperbaton and make the formula more understandable, a few witnesses replace the article τῆς with τῷ and connect the angel to the location “in Ephesus” (Alexandrine and Ephrem rewritten, for Rev 2,1; Alexandrine for Rev 2,8; 2050 for Rev 2,12; Alexandrine and the Syriac version by Thomas of Heraclea for Rev 2,18; 046, the Syriac version by Thomas of Heraclea for Rev 3,1). Though less attested with respect to the main *lectio*, which is nevertheless the most utilized for Rev 3,7.14, the reading chosen by NA²⁸ is to be preferred because is the *lectio difficilior*.

⁵⁸ Similar formulas but without hyperbaton can be found in Rom 16,1 and Acts 11,22.

mention of the angels in Rev 1,11, it is not because they are part of the churches to which the letters are to be sent, but because they are different from the churches, even though they are being sent to them. If John had wanted to identify the angels in Rev 2,1a and par. with the local churches or some parts of them, he would not have used the hyperbaton that distances the angels from the churches.

Therefore, due to the relationship between βιβλίον and ἄγγελος, in the epistolary-apocalyptic context, the first term should be rendered with “letter” and not “book”, and the second with “courier” or *bibliaphoros*, one of the ways to refer to these epistolary messengers. The relationship between the secretary and the letter courier solves the long-standing enigma between John and the angel in Rev 2,1 and parallels. Why should the Risen One use a man, John, to address an angel even to the point of reproaching him? Simply because during the vision John is not the sender, nor even less the medium, but only a simple secretary, and the angel is not the recipient but the courier who has the important responsibility of delivering the letter to a church.

VI. THE LETTER COURIER

In the epistolary model that relates the secretary to the courier, the dative τῷ ἄγγέλῳ does not appear to be instrumental, nor advantageous, but is associative or *comitativus*⁵⁹. The sender (the Risen One) asks John (the secretary) to write and send the specific letter with the courier. Among the occurrences of the associative dative in Revelation, we would like to point out the passages in Rev 8,3-4 where it is said that an angel was given incense so that he might offer it with (ταῖς) the prayers of all the saints and “the smoke of incense rose with (ταῖς) the prayers of the saints”⁶⁰.

In this paradigm, the use of the imperative “write” (γράψον) in Revelation is poignant. In the eleven times it appears, only in Rev 1,11 are the recipients the churches of Asia, and only here is it linked with the verb “send” (πέμψον). The same destination should apply for Rev 1,19, which reiterates Rev 1,11, and for the formula in Rev 2,1a and parallels. In the other occurrences (Rev 14,13; 19,9; and 21,5), the verb γράψον is always related to the things the seer must write about for the benefit of the reader

⁵⁹ See BDF §§102-103; N. TURNER, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*. III. Syntax (Edinburgh 1963) 240-241; D.B. WALLACE, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*. An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI 1996) 159-160.

⁶⁰ For the rest of the NT, see the associative dative case in 2 Cor 6,14; Eph 2,5; Jas 2,22; Heb 11,31; Acts 9,7.

and not of an angel. It is no coincidence that on one of the rare occurrences when the secretary of a proto-Christian letter sends his greetings, he uses the verb γράφω: “I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord” (Rom 16,22). In the vision, John of Patmos carries out the same function Tertius performs in the Letter to the Romans.

According to its syntactic relations, we are aware that the genitive takes on multiple functions. If in Rev 2,1a and par. it is a courier who is entrusted with the letter to be delivered to its destination, the most logical function of the genitive τῆς ἐν Ἐφέσῳ ἐκκλησίας and par. is of direction. Blass – Debrunner relate the genitive indicating direction to the noun ὁδός⁶¹, but they do not discuss the cases of Rev 2,1a and their parallels. On the contrary and precisely because the courier accomplishes his task from Ephesus, the *caput viarum*, the genitive in Rev 2,1a and par. is neither possessive, nor attributive, nor epexegetical; it signals, instead, direction or purpose. The genitive of direction is frequent in the NT and in Revelation. This is how we should understand “the crown of life” (Rev 2,10), “the book of life” (Rev 3,5; 17,27), “the word of witness” (Rev 3,10), “the day of prophecy” (Rev 11,6), “the harvest of the earth” (Rev 14,5), “the Spirit of prophecy” (Rev 19,10), and “the water of life” (Rev 21,6). What is in question here, among other things, are the crown and the book for life, the word for witness, the day for prophecy, the harvest for the earth, the Spirit for prophecy and the water for life. Without in any way intending to downplay the other meanings of the genitive cases, the genitive of direction should be kept in mind.

The symbolic explanation in Rev 1,20, prior to the specific letters, confirms the genitives of direction that introduce the extra-epistolary formulas: “The seven stars are messengers for the seven churches (τῶν ἐπὶ τὰ ἐκκλησιῶν) and the seven lampstands are the seven churches”. Again, the genitive “of the seven churches” indicates a direction; otherwise the seven stars would coincide with the seven lampstands, thereby causing a pointless tautology. While the one who is like the son of man holds the seven stars and grasps them in his right hand (Rev 1,16; 2,1), he stands in the midst of the seven golden lampstands and walks among them (Rev 1,13; 2,1). For this reason, the Risen One speaks to the church of Sardis as one who has “seven spirits of God and the seven stars” (Rev 3,1). Once again, the seven spirits and the seven stars are different from the seven lampstands and relate, in a different way, to the seven churches.

⁶¹ On the use of the genitive case to indicate direction, see BDF §92, with examples in Matt 10,5; John 5,29; 10,7; Acts 14,27; WALLACE, *Greek Grammar*, 100-101, who cites Gal 2,7; Rom 8,36; Heb 9,8.

Therefore, in our opinion, because of the connections with Rev 1,11-20 and 22,6-16, the enigmatic expression in Rev 2,1 and par. should be rendered as follows: “With the courier to the church that is in Ephesus, write [...]”. John is asked to write the letter of the Ruler of kings, a letter that the angelic messenger will deliver to the specific church. The hypothesis that Rev 2,1 and par. are about the secretary and the letter courier needs to be verified for the impact they have on the seven letters.

VII. THE OUTLINE OF THE ROYAL LETTERS

The epistolary outline of each letter proceeds with the following pattern in Rev 2,1 – 3,22:

- a) Extra-epistolary formula (γράψον in Rev 2,1a and par.);
- b) Regal *superscriptio* (τάδε λέγει in Rev 2,1b and par.);
- c) Epistolary body (οἶδα in Rev 2,2-6 and par.);
- d) Promissory formula (ὁ ἔχων οὕς ἀκουσάτω in Rev 2,7 and par.).

The parts dedicated to the contents of each letter (Rev 2,1b-7) are measured by the anaphora. With the initial repetition of each part, the sender tries to fix the contents of each letter in the listener’s memory. As for the majority of the royal letters, the most important part is the promissory formula (Rev 2,7) which, based on the praise and blame of the preceding parts, promises victory for those who observe the edict ⁶².

The major difference between the various parts occurs in the passage from the extra-epistolary formula (Rev 2,1a) to the *superscriptio* (Rev 2,1b). While in the extra-epistolary formula the Ruler speaks to the secretary with the letter courier, in the *superscriptio* he speaks in the first person to the addressees summoned in assembly. The expression τάδε λέγει, placed at the beginning of each letter, is characteristic of royal edicts, transmitted in the epistolary form, that do not require the other parts of the pre-script. The best-known case is the edict of Cyrus that closes 2 Chronicles and is introduced by the same formula as Rev 2,1a and par.: “These things says (τάδε λέγει) Cyrus, king of the Persians” (2 Chr 36,23) ⁶³. Now, if

⁶² On the “Weckruf” or the wake-up call in Rev 2,7, see M. STOWASSER, “Die Send-schreiben”, 51. However, according to the ancient epistolary outline, the sentence of Rev 2,7 is a promissory formula, which sometimes closes the letters. See the promissory formulae in 2 Cor 13,1-2; Gal 6,16; Phlm 19 for Pauline letters.

⁶³ See also 2 Kgs 9,19 (LXX); 18,19; 2 Chr 36,23; 1 Esdr 2,2 (LXX); FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS, *Ant.* 11,26. See also *P. London* 1912 (41 CE) with the simple verb λέγει in the prescription of Claudius’ edict to the Alexandrians. The introductory formula “the king says” for the

we disregard the extra-epistolary formulas (Rev 2,1a and par.), in the section Rev 2,1b – 3,22 there is no longer any mention of ἄγγελος, except for the letter to the church of Sardis (Rev 3,5). However, even in this case we are not dealing with the ἄγγελοι who may belong to the churches, nor with those who govern them from their transcendence, but with the angels on Judgment Day. At that time, the name of the victor will be confessed by the Risen One before the Father and his angels.

At first glance, the use of masculine adjectives in each letter would suggest the figure of the angel of the extra-epistolary formula and not the church (see especially the masculine adjectives in Rev 3,15-17). In reality, the use of masculine adjectives in the letters is due to the shift from the church to its members, called δοῦλοι throughout the book (Rev 1,1) ⁶⁴. The use of the masculine form of the participle ὁ νικῶν in the promissory formula Rev 2,11 and par. lies within the same intra-ecclesial and non-angelic pattern.

Therefore, both the angelic couriers and the angels of Judgement Day do not belong to the churches to which the letters are sent. As would be typical of couriers, their function ends with the delivery of the letter to the local church. The same applies to the secretary. Apart from the extra-epistolary formulas that order him to write, the secretary is absent from the scene. In the epistolary body, there remains the Ruler of kings, who speaks in the first person, through what the Spirit says to the churches, with the various addressees of the letters. The departure of the secretary and the courier can only be explained in the context of royal epistolography. Their duties finish with the writing (the secretary) and the delivery of the letter (the courier) to the magistrate who presides at the district assizes.

The epistolary paradigm also explains the function of the Spirit. Strangely enough, it is said at the beginning that the Spirit was before the throne of God and the Ruler of kings (Rev 1,4). One would expect a *salutatio* where grace and peace are wished from God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. This is why Robert H. Charles once defined the Trinitarian formula in Rev 1,4-5 as a “grotesque conception” ⁶⁵. In reality, the clarification is

royal letters could also be declined with the formula “so says the Lord” (Amos 1,3 – 2,6) for the prophetic oracles. The two backgrounds are present in the formula “these things he says” used in Rev 2,1 – 3,14 because the Ruler speaks to every church through the Spirit.

⁶⁴ See Rev 2,20 for the servants in the church of Thyatira; and also Rev 6,15; 7,3; 10,7; 11,18; 13,16; 15,3; 19,2.5.18; 22,6.

⁶⁵ R.H. CHARLES, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (New York 1920) I, lii.

far from grotesque, if it is understood as part of the epistolary symbolism. The sevenfold Spirit is sent by the Ruler to speak in his place to the churches. The new formula, “he who has ears let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev 2,7.11.17.29; 3,6.13.22), introduces (Rev 2,7b.11b.17) or closes the promissory formula (Rev 2,29; 3,6.13.22), which describes the rewards that the Ruler will bestow on the victors.

Therefore, the difference between the secretary and the courier, on the one hand, and the individual churches, on the other, shows that the former terminate their duties with the writing and delivery of the letter, while the church and the individual churches are summoned to hear the edict that the Spirit communicates in the name of the Ruler of kings.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

The historic and geographical background of the province in Asia and the function of the royal letters under Domitian seem to clarify several obscure aspects regarding the identity and function of the angels in the letters. First of all, the angels in Revelation 1–3 are not human beings, nor are they to be identified with the churches of Asia or with some of their members (overseers, prophets, charismatics). Rather, they are angelic couriers who perform the important function of carrying letters in the name of the Ruler of kings.

The organization of the province of Asia with the principal legal districts (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamon, Sardis and Laodicea) and the dependent districts (Tyatira from Pergamon and Philadelphia from Sardis), must have inspired the author of Revelation to compose the section concerning the letters. The consolidated and well-tested *cursus publicus*, which started from Ephesus, the *caput viae*, and branched out to every city in the province, assimilated the angels of the letters to the letter couriers under Domitian.

In this hypothesis, the angelic courier performs its role for the seven letters. Alongside the secretary, the courier receives the order to bring the imperial edict for each church to its destination. The secretary and the courier complete their duties with the drafting and delivery of the letter to each church. As for the contents of the letters, the Ruler speaks in the first person through his Spirit. The outline of the royal letters indicates the key difference between the extra-epistolary formula (Rev 2,1a and par.) and the content of each letter (Rev 2,1b-7 and par.). Besides the seven letters, the courier and the churches are no longer involved, except in the

final lines of Revelation, when the Risen One reveals that he has sent his courier to give testimony to the churches that he is the root, the lineage of David and the radiant morning star (Rev 22,16).

In the paradigm of epistolary symbolism, the dative τῷ ἀγγέλῳ (Rev 2,1a) does not specify the receiver of an action, nor the means or the benefit. Instead, the dative τῷ ἀγγέλῳ has an associative meaning. The secretary (John) is ordered to write and in collaboration with the courier to deliver the seven letters to the churches. In turn, the genitive τῆς ... ἐκκλησίας is not possessive, but indicates a direction since it refers to the church in the single city where it is destined. The hyperbaton in Rev 2,1a and par. substantially separates the angel from the church because the former does not belong to the church but is sent to it with the letter, while the church is the recipient of the letter that the Spirit reads in the assembly in the name of the Ruler. The epistolary symbolism is essential for understanding the contents and details of the section: from the Ruler who governs his churches with the royal edicts, to the secretary who writes down what he has seen, to the courier who delivers the letter, to the Spirit who speaks in the assembly, and to the churches that receive the letters. Only by attending to the symbolic paradigm of royal epistolary practice is it possible to grasp the relations between the sender, the secretary, the courier, the reader and the churches, with their various members.

Therefore, the angelic courier should be added to angelic Christology, to the angel as mediator and interpreter, and to the angel for the last judgment. Appearing in the section of the letters (Rev 1,4–3,22) and at the end of the book (Rev 22,16), the angelic couriers perform the key function of receiving from the secretary, who writes under dictation, the edict to be delivered to the churches. Without the angelic courier, the Ruler would not have been able to govern the churches at a distance, and the secretary would have performed a useless task. Perhaps this insight will resolve the long-standing enigma of the angels in the seven letters.

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SUMMARY

The system for the transmission of edicts in epistolary form under the Roman Principate seems to shed new light on the long-standing enigma of the angels in Rev 1,4–3,22. The angels in the section are not human beings but supernatural beings who are sent as symbolic epistolary couriers to churches convened in the

main tax districts of Asia. The symbolic secretary (John of Patmos) is ordered to write the edicts dictated by the Ruler of kings and to hand them over to the angelic couriers who will then deliver them to the churches. Without the letter courier, the symbolic Ruler could not have governed his churches in absentia, and the secretary would have performed a useless task. The hyperbaton, the associative dative case and the genitive of direction require a new translation of Rev 2,1a and par: “With the courier to the church that is in Ephesus, write [...]”.

A SECOND LOOK AT PSALM 84,4

Anyone wishing to suggest an alternative translation of Ps 84,4 faces a daunting task. The rendering of the NRSV (below) with only slight variations has been the undisputed translation ¹ since the LXX ² in the second century BCE: “Even the sparrow finds a home, / and the swallow a nest for herself, / where she may lay her young, / at your altars, O LORD of hosts, my king and God”.

Despite the universal acceptance of the translation, however, there are reasons for a second look. The first is a doubt that bird nests would have been tolerated on an Israelite altar. In 2 Chr 29,16, for example, at King Hezekiah’s command, “The priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD to cleanse it, and they brought out all the unclean things that they found in the temple of the LORD into the court of the house of the LORD and the Levites took them and carried them out to the Wadi Kidron” (2 Chr 29,16; NRSV here and elsewhere). It is hard to imagine the priests leaving bird nests on the altars they cleaned.

A recent article by G. Freuling has given one answer to the question of how an altar could be the nest for birds: “The solution is simple if את, which precedes מזבחותיך is understood as a preposition ([GKC] §103b): ‘near’ (*bei*) the altars, even in the inner part of the sanctuary. In the course of the first strophe a path is traceable from outside YHWH’s dwelling (v. 2) through the forecourt (v. 3) to the altars inside (v. 4)”. Freuling’s essay contains a valuable insight in advising us to see a gradual movement from outer temple to forecourt to inner sanctuary, yet it does not answer the problem of bird nests in the sanctuary ³. The nests are still “beside” (את)

¹ The only exception, to my knowledge, is NAB: “As the sparrow finds a home / and the swallow a nest to settle her young, / my home is by your altars”. The revision, NABR (2011), adopted the NAB translation without change.

² LXX: καὶ γὰρ στρούθιον εὗρεν ἑαυτῷ οἰκίαν καὶ τρυγὼν νοσσιὰν ἑαυτῇ οὗ θήσει τὰ νοσσία αὐτῆς τὰ θυσιαστήριά σου κύριε τῶν δυνάμεων ὁ βασιλεὺς μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου. NETS is faithful to the LXX in not translating את as the preposition “with”, rendering neutrally “where she will lay her young: Your altars, O LORD of hosts”. Jerome’s two translations of the Psalter, iuxta LXX, and iuxta Hebraeos, follow the LXX in not translating את either as an accusative marker or as a preposition, “ubi ponat pullos suos altaria tua Domine”. The Douay-Rheims English translation renders Vg literally as expected.

³ “Die gelegentlich aufgeworfene Frage, wie ein Altar zur Niststätte von Vögeln werden kann, löst sich einfach, wenn את präpositionell verstanden wird ([GKC] §103b): ‘bei’ den Altären, selbst im Inneren des Heiligtums. — Im Verlauf der ersten Strophe wird dann ein Weg abgeschritten von der Außenansicht der Wohnungen JHWHs (V. 2) über die Vorhöfe

your altars”, as E. Zenger translates the phrase ⁴. Whether one accepts Freuling’s perspective, or adopts the “distancing strategy” of LXX and Vg, or views the verse as a metaphor or an allegory, the bird nests still remain next to the altar. This fact requires an explanation.

A second and related issue is the meaning of the birds in v. 4abc (the sparrow and the swallow, or perhaps simply the bird and the swallow). In my view, they are not primarily symbols of God’s care for the least of his creatures as one might possibly infer from the security they now enjoy in the sanctuary. Rather, in accord with biblical symbolism the birds are proverbial examples of weakness and vulnerability, symbolizing the longing for safety that characterizes both the birds and the psalmist. Like other psalms that compare the yearning for Zion to the yearning for a basic necessity of life — water in Pss 42,2 and 63,2 — Psalm 84 yearns for basic protection, using as an example the proverbially vulnerable bird. Just as the psalmists of Psalms 42–43 and 63 hoped to slake their thirst by visiting the temple, so the beleaguered psalmist of Psalm 84 hopes for protection by dwelling in the temple. Isa 16,2 compares refugees in a war to birds forced from their nests: “Like fluttering birds, / like scattered nestlings (*qēn*), / so are the daughters of Moab / at the fords of the Arnon”. Prov 27,8 shows how displaced birds were proverbial for their defenselessness: “Like a bird fleeing from its nest / is anyone fleeing from his place” ⁵. Animate beings are defined by their “place”. It is tragic when war, poverty, or illness force them from their homes, but, correspondingly, how overwhelming is their sense of relief when they attain safety and arrive at their “place”.

The phrase in Ps 84c, “where she may lay her young”, expands the notion of “nest” much like the comparisons in Song of Solomon, e.g., “Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes / that have come up from the washing, all of which bear twins, / and not one of them is bereaved” (Song 4,2). For a moment, it seems, the poet’s eye fixes on one term of the comparison to the exclusion of the other; in this psalm, the poet focuses on the safety of the birds symbolized by the mother bird being able to stay with its nestlings. In extending the phrase in this way, however, the poet has unwittingly made the ellipsis in the verse more difficult to discern.

(V. 3) zu den Altären im Inneren (V. 4).” G. FREULING, “Die Vögel im Heiligtum: Anmerkungen zu Psalm 84,4”, *BZ* 61 (2017) 249–254, here 250, n. 7.

⁴ F.L. HOSSFELD – E. ZENGER, *Psalms 2. A Commentary on Psalms 51–100* (ed. K. BALTZER; trans. L.M. MALONEY) (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN 2005) 348–349.

⁵ Other passages show the vulnerability of birds: Pss 11,1; 124,7; Qoh 9,12; and Hos 11,11.

I suggest that Psalm 84 contains an ellipsis that has gone unrecognized over the centuries and led to a misunderstanding of v. 4. The psalmist has left something out, which a native speaker would have readily supplied, but which a non-native speaker might easily miss ⁶. In a recent summary of research on ellipsis in biblical poetry, Cynthia L. Miller points out that a linguistic ellipsis, including ellipsis in the Bible, follows defined conditions ⁷. Three conditions characterize ellipses across many languages: (1) an ellipsis operates on coordinate structures; in biblical poetry, such coordinate lines are often joined with the conjunction *wāw* (“and”); (2) the two halves of the coordinate sentence must correspond syntactically; and (3) the verb that is present and the verb that is omitted must be lexically identical.

An efficient way to present the case for an ellipsis in Ps 84,2-4 is to lay out the verses as below. The omitted verb “finds” (**מצאה**) is expressed in v. 4a and must be “supplied” in v. 4d; both are underlined below. In v. 4a, the subject of the verb is “sparrow” (or “bird”), and in v. 4d the subject is “my soul” (or “My heart and my flesh”) from a previous verse. Both the expressed verb and the omitted verb are third person singular feminine in the G (Qal) conjugation, thus fulfilling the third condition mentioned above that the expressed and omitted verbs be syntactically identical.

מה־יִידוֹת מִשְׁכְּנוֹתֶיךָ
 יִהְיֶה צְבָאוֹת:³
 נִכְסְפָה וְגַם־כָּלְהָהּ | נִפְשִׁי
 לַחֲצֵרוֹת יְהוָה
 לִבִּי וּבִשְׂרִי
 יִרְנְנוּ אֵל אֱלֹהֵי:
 גַּם־צִפּוֹר | מִצְאָה בֵּית⁴
 וּדְרוֹר | קֵן לָהּ
 אֲשֶׁר־שָׁתָה אֶפְרַחֶיהָ
 [נִפְשִׁי מִצְאָה] אֶת־מִזְבְּחוֹתֶיךָ
 יִהְיֶה צְבָאוֹת
 מַלְכִּי וְאֱלֹהֵי:

How lovely is your dwelling,
 O LORD of hosts!
 My soul yearns and pines
 for the courts of the LORD.
 My heart and flesh shout for joy
 to the living God.

⁶ An example of an ellipsis given in Miller: John ate apples and Sue oranges. “Ate” is omitted in the second colon and must be supplied from the preceding colon.

⁷ C.L. MILLER, “A Linguistic Approach to Ellipsis in Biblical Poetry”, *BBR* 13 (2003) 251-270.

As the sparrow *finds* a home
 and the swallow a nest
 in which to settle her young ⁸,
 [my soul *finds*] your altars,
 LORD of hosts,
 my king and my God.

As noted above, the Hebrew phrase, “where she may lay her young”, אשר-שתה אפרחיה, had the unintended consequence of separating the omitted verb מצאה from its coordinate in the earlier line. The ellipsis would have been clearer had vv. 4c not been added. The verb מצא means “to find, to attain to”, “with [the] idea of attaining to, arriving at, a resting-place Gn 8,9 (J), Is 34,14, cf. Ps 84,4, Je 45,3, La 1,3” ⁹.

Also contributing to the coordination of the birds’ and the psalmist’s longings is the adverb גם in v. 4, which is, according to *IBHS*, “a major coordinator” ¹⁰. “In Mal 1,10 and Job 2,10, גם is placed before two coordinate sentences, although, strictly speaking, it applies only to the second” ¹¹. In Ps 84,4, גם alerts the reader to the correlation of bird and psalmist, both longing for a safe and secure home.

To summarize, the traditional translation of Ps 84,4 is unsatisfactory because it assumes that bird nests would be placed on altars, and because birds in the Bible symbolize weakness and defenselessness rather than gentleness and mildness. In my view, the verse contains a hitherto unrecognized ellipsis. The reader has to supply the omitted verb from a syntactically similar prior coordinate. Supplying the verb “find” in v. 4d from v. 4a makes it clear that the psalmist finds the altar like a vulnerable bird finding a secure nest.

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⁸ Samson Raphael Hirsch translates v. 4 (note the verb tenses): “Auch der Vogel *findet* das Haus wieder und die Schwalbe ihr eigen Nest, wo sie ihre Jungen *geborgen hatte*: deine Altäre, Gott Zebaoth, mein König und mein Gott!” Hirsch comments that as the bird returns to its nest drawn by a profound desire for the place where it had given birth to its young and nurtured them, so the psalmist is likewise drawn to the altars that have been a source of his spiritual and moral life (*Die Psalmen* [Frankfurt 1924] 73-74). I thank the anonymous *Biblica* reviewer for this insight.

⁹ BDB 592.1.a.

¹⁰ *IBHS* 39.3.4d.

¹¹ GKC §153.

SUMMARY

The article calls into question the traditional translation of Ps 84,4 (“Even the sparrow finds a home, / and the swallow a nest for herself, / where she may lay her young, / at your altars”) on the grounds that bird nests would not have been allowed on Israelite altars and that birds in the Bible symbolize vulnerability and weakness rather than gentleness and mildness. It proposes instead a hitherto unrecognized ellipsis of “find” in v. 4d supplied from v. 4a “the sparrow finds a home” and “my soul [finds] your altars”.

RECENSIONES

Vetus Testamentum

Jaap J.T. DOEDENS, *The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1–4*. Analysis and History of Exegesis (Oudtestamentische Studiën 76). Leiden, Brill, 2019. xxiv-369 p. 16.5 × 24. €127,00

This monograph offers the revised and corrected text of the doctoral dissertation that the author completed at the Theological University of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, Kampen, under the supervision of Gert Kwakkel.

It focuses on the analysis of Gen 6,1-4, the brief pericope which recalls the mysterious unions between the בני־האלהים and the בנות האדם (Gen 6,2) situated in the period before the arrival of the Flood. The methodology followed by Doedens for his exegesis is avowedly synchronic: “for the exegesis of Gen 6:1–4, a synchronic approach appears to be more fruitful than a diachronic one” (10).

The work opens with an introductory chapter (“Setting the Course: Introduction”, 1-12), which sets out the four principal solutions that the history of exegesis has proposed for interpreting the somewhat imprecise expression בני־האלהים as a reference to: (a) angels (“Angels-Interpretation”); (b) heroic and virtuous men (“Mighty Ones-Interpretation”); (c) descendants of Seth, third-born of Adam (“Sethites-Interpretation”); and (d) the vaguely described divinities of the heavenly pantheon (“Divine Beings-Interpretation”).

This *status quaestionis* of exegetical research is followed by a chapter which focuses chiefly on questions of a lexical and grammatical nature (“A Quest for Meaning: Analyzing Genesis 6:1–4”, 13-76). It is in this chapter that the author maintains the plausibility of matching the expression בני־האלהים to particular heavenly creatures, as in proposals (a) and (d) above, and not to beings belonging to the human sphere, as in proposals (b) and (c) above. This chapter also includes comments on other important expressions of Gen 6,1-4 from a lexical point of view: in particular, בנות האדם (Gen 6,2.4), the terms נפלים (Gen 6,4) and גברים (Gen 6,4), and the text which imposes the limit of one hundred and twenty years on human life (Gen 6,3).

The third and most extensive chapter (“Trodden Paths: History of Exegesis of the Expression ‘Sons of God’”, 77-177) offers a broad panorama of the history of exegesis of Gen 6,1-4, beginning with the renderings of the ancient versions, continuing with discussions of the rabbinic tradition, the Fathers of the Church, the medieval and Reformation authors, and concluding with a summary of the positions of contemporary scholars. From a chronological point of view, the “Angels-Interpretation” turns out to be the most ancient interpretation of the expression בני־האלהים: it appears particularly dominant in Jewish exegesis from the second century BCE to the second century CE, thus showing itself to be a probable debtor to the Enochic tradition. Otherwise, it is also the patristic exegesis from the end

of the fourth to the beginnings of the fifth century CE which gave the strongest welcome to this type of interpretation. However, it is in Jewish exegesis from the first to the second centuries CE that the “Mighty Ones-Interpretation” (focusing especially on the figures of kings or judges) begins to develop. This did not go unchallenged since the “Angels-Interpretation” remained rather persistent, especially in the Targumic rereadings. By contrast, in order to find traces of the oldest attestations of the “Sethites-Interpretation”, we have to go to the first half of the third century CE, particularly to the works of Julius Africanus, who mentions it alongside the more traditional “Angels-Interpretation”. If the “Sethites-Interpretation” can still be found alongside the “Angels-Interpretation” in the fourth century CE, in the course of time the former found particular favor over the latter until its disappearance. It is probable, in fact, that the slow disappearance of the Enochic tradition, and so, simultaneously, of the “Angels-Interpretation” that was dependent on it, favored the advance of the “Sethites-Interpretation”, the true origin of which, in Doedens’ estimation, can be detected in the Syriac tradition. It is worth mentioning that, for this interpretation, Gen 6,1-4 would have to be understood from a “male perspective” in which the בני־האלהים appear principally as victims of the בנות האדם.

The fourth chapter (“At the Crossroads: Weighing Exegetical Solutions”, 178-250) offers an assessment of the various exegetical approaches to the expression בני־האלהים which were presented in the third chapter. On the basis of the lexical analysis carried out in the second chapter, Doedens rejects the “Mighty Ones-Interpretation”, just as he distances himself from the “Sethites-Interpretation”; the latter would be just a theological construction without any textual evidence, considering also that no other occurrence of בני־האלהים can be interpreted as alluding to the “sons of Seth”. Observing the close affinity between the “Angels-Interpretation” and the “Divine Beings-Interpretation”, Doedens goes for the greater plausibility of the latter: thus, the expression in question would refer to “divine or heavenly beings not otherwise specified” (244). Only with the advance of theological thought would these “divine or heavenly beings” have been identified with the angels.

The fifth and last chapter (251-295) focuses mainly on the theological consequences of interpreting the expression בני־האלהים as a vague reference to divine beings. According to Doedens, the union of these heavenly beings with humans can be understood with reference to idolatry and its resident promise of power: the descendants of these unions between heaven and earth would have embodied the Promethean dream of building themselves a lasting name and permanence as, indeed, the inhabitants of the land of Shinar intend to do in Gen 11,1-9. Just as, there, God puts an end to their plan with their dispersal and the confusion of languages (cf. Gen 11,7-8), so, here, he frustrates their aims by establishing the maximum limit of one hundred and twenty years to their lives (cf. Gen 6,3).

In addition to the acknowledgments (vii-viii) and a list of abbreviations (ix-xxiv), the volume is furnished with an exhaustive bibliography (297-336), as well as indices of modern authors (337-345), subjects (346-349) and ancient sources (350-369).

The present work has the great merit of having gathered together for the first time in a single monograph the exegetical debate about Gen 6,1-4 from the end of the Hellenistic period to the present day, illustrating carefully and exhaustively a mountain of data greatly varying in quantity and quality. In this sense, Doedens’ work is to be hailed with approval and recognition.

Here and there, the author's synchronic methodology seems to fall into some inconsistencies. For example, it is difficult to claim that the *tôlēdôt*-formula "divides the book of Genesis into twelve sections" (7), when it is quite evident that it occurs eleven times in the book. To arrive at the number twelve, he must include also Gen 1,1, where, quite clearly, that formula does not appear. Building upon the work of J.H. Walton (*The Lost World of Genesis One*. Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate [The Lost World Series 2; Downers Grove, IL 2009] 44), Doedens asserts that the *tôlēdôt*-formula "can only continue a sequence, it cannot begin a sequence", and so for this reason "the word בראשית [...] would be an adequate term at the very beginning of such a sequence" (7, n. 11); this would explain why Gen 1,1 can be included in the number of the eleven *tôlēdôt*-formula, thus arriving at the number of twelve (*sic*). But it is not correct, and precisely from a synchronic point of view, to assert that the *tôlēdôt*-formula cannot open a textual section in Genesis. In fact, the opposite is the case: when this formula appears, it is always *followed* either by a narrative (cf. Gen 2,4; 6,9; 11,27; 25,19; 37,2) or by a genealogical list of names (cf. Gen 5,1; 10,1; 11,10; 25,12; 36,1.9). If we prescind from the onomastic lists to which this formula clearly acts as a prologue, then we observe the following pattern: whenever the formula is followed by a narrative, this always deals with stories bound up with the *descendants* of the figure mentioned in the formula (*tôlēdôt* of Noah [6,9], of Terah [11,27], of Isaac [25,19], of Jacob [37,2]). In this way, *all* the *tôlēdôt*-formulas always appear to be *introductory*, precisely because each time they are immediately followed by the mention of the genitive of the name of the progenitor, *never* by that of the descendants. It is precisely with these latter that the narratives *introduced* by this formula are concerned (see, e.g., J. Skinner, *Genesis* [ICC 1; Edinburgh 1910] 41; B. Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Tora. Genesis* [Berlin 1934] 71; B.S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* [Philadelphia, PA 1979] 145; J.L. Ska, *Introduzione alla lettura del Pentateuco*. Chiavi per l'interpretazione dei primi cinque libri della Bibbia [Collana biblica; Roma 1998; Bologna 2000] 31-32). By treating the pericope in question according to a synchronic approach, Doedens more than once finds himself in the difficulty of having to admit its possibly very late origin and, similarly, its debt to certain Greek myths of the late-Persian and Hellenistic periods (see, e.g., 45, 295). In fact, it is a datum now widely accepted and firmly demonstrated by scholars that the whole of Genesis 1–11, Gen 6,1-4 included, belongs exclusively either to the Persian or the Hellenistic periods of composition (among the vast bibliography, see A. Schüle, *Der Prolog der hebräischen Bibel. Der literar- und theologiegeschichtliche Diskurs der Urgeschichte* (Genesis 1–11) [ATHANT 86; Zürich 2006]; IDEM, *Die Urgeschichte (Genesis 1–11)* [Zürcher Bibelkommentare AT 1.1; Zürich 2009]; M. Arneth, *Durch Adams Fall ist ganz verderbt... Studien zur Entstehung der alttestamentlichen Urgeschichte* [FRLANT 217; Göttingen 2007]). If, while not renouncing his synchronic position, Doedens had accepted this fact, he would have had less difficulty, for example, in interpreting the word בַּשָּׁנָה in Gen 6,3 as a simple composite preposition (נָח + אֲשֶׁר) — "since", "because" —, characteristic of Middle and Late Biblical Hebrew (as he rightly notes and which, in fact, it is), and not the infinitive construct of the verb שָׁגַג — "to err" — with an added preposition ב and a pronominal suffix ה, as he actually makes it (49).

Furthermore, since this publication saw the light in 2019, it would have been appropriate beforehand to have updated the text of the author's dissertation

(defended in 2013), on which it is based, mentioning, where necessary, the references of the textual-critical commentary from the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*, in which series the volume devoted to *Genesis*, prepared by A. Tal, appeared in 2015.

Apart from these critical observations, Doedens work appears as a useful and up-to-date contribution that is informed and well written. Its chief value lies in having provided a substantially comprehensive picture of the history of the exegesis of Gen 6,1-4, distinguishing itself as a valid tool for whoever is looking for greater light about the mysterious unions between the בני-האלהים and בנות האדם and their progeny, who played an important role in the literary characterisation of the obscure periods before the Flood.

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Georg FISCHER, *Genesis 1–11* (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament). Freiburg i. Br., Herder, 2018. 752 p. € 115.00

Dopo i due corposi volumi sul libro di Geremia, Georg Fischer, professore all'Università di Innsbruck, dimostra ancora che il genere "commentario" fa decisamente parte delle sue competenze. Oltre a Geremia (2005) e Genesi 1–11 (2018) Fischer ha pubblicato infatti un commento al libro dell'Esodo (NSK.AT 2011) e una voluminosa monografia sulle teologie dell'Antico Testamento (NSK.AT 2012). Naturalmente dopo quasi quarant'anni di insegnamento, con un vasto numero di pubblicazioni e di conferenze in congressi internazionali, egli può far riferimento a una lunga serie di lavori preparatori; è anche per questi motivi che la disciplina mostrata nel portare a compimento il lavoro è ammirevole. La competenza in campo esegetico si somma a una eccezionale conoscenza dei testi nel panorama accademico europeo e, soprattutto, a una capacità di sintesi straordinaria, che nel commentario si evince non solo a livello macrostrutturale, ma anche a livello dell'analisi di singole espressioni, lessemi, rapporti intertestuali.

Lo stile del commentario e soprattutto la metodologia nell'approccio al testo inaugurano davvero una nuova epoca nella comprensione di questo genere letterario, come Eckart Otto nella sua recensione al secondo volume del commentario su Geremia giustamente notava. Già la lettura dell'indice del volume e delle prime pagine dell'introduzione rivela un approccio innovativo e fondamentalmente inaspettato. Quarantaquattro anni dopo l'altrettanto imponente commento di Westermann (BK), che ha influenzato generazioni di esegeti, Fischer affronta il testo non come una "storia-prima-della-storia" (*Urgeschichte*), ma come un "prologo della storia". Dal punto di vista ermeneutico, la differenza tra i due commentari non potrebbe essere maggiore. Di conseguenza, Westermann non è certo uno dei pilastri su cui Fischer si appoggia. Nell'introduzione vengono nominati diversi autori cui si fa riferimento, tra gli altri gli studiosi ebrei Jacob (inarriavabile) e Cassuto, quindi Wenham (WBC) o il pressoché sconosciuto Thomas Brodie, autore di un commento alla Genesi dal titolo evocativo: "Genesi come Dialogo". L'approccio metodologico comune a questi autori parte da una visione canonica e sincronica del testo per arrivare fino a interpretazioni di carattere spirituale. Non sono esattamente gli autori cui tipicamente ci si riferisce in commenti di scuola tedesca.

Fischer propone un nuovo modo di leggere Genesi 1–11 a partire dall'Introduzione, dove non si tratta la storia della redazione del testo, ma — come già nel commento all'Esodo — si omette ogni riferimento al classico modello documentario. Quest'ultimo, del resto, non è mai menzionato nel corso del commentario. Nel capitolo finale — una novità molto ben pensata (!) che permette una sintesi allo studioso che nella collana commenta solo una sezione di un libro biblico (un esempio che dovrebbe essere seguito anche nel caso di altri volumi!) — la presa di posizione è chiara, univoca e definitiva. Lo scritto sacerdotale (*Priesterschrift*) non solo non è necessario per spiegare il testo, ma non è nemmeno una fonte; pertanto, non può essere considerato una denominazione per definire un'attività di carattere redazionale. Una tale affermazione non si era ancora letta in un commentario in lingua tedesca. Naturalmente lo scopo di Fischer non è quello di eliminare due secoli di ricerca storico-critica, che Fischer conosce, ma con cui non teme il confronto. Nel commento versetto per versetto analizza i passaggi tradizionalmente considerati "sacerdotali" e giunge alla conclusione che le differenze stilistiche, contenutistiche, filologiche e teologiche all'interno di P non possono far pensare a un'attività redazionale univoca. Ad esempio, dal punto di vista narratologico, nel testo finale le differenze che si riscontrano tra la voce del narratore e quella dei discorsi diretti dei protagonisti dei racconti sono più pronunciate di quelle che altri esegeti percepiscono tra i testi attribuiti a J, E o P.

La questione delle fonti, della loro ricostruzione e delle apparenti incongruenze viene risolta di volta in volta ricorrendo a motivazioni di natura narrativa o retorica. Il testo finale è sempre l'orizzonte interpretativo privilegiato che Fischer non è disposto a mettere in discussione e che viene strenuamente difeso a fronte di modelli interpretativi diacronici. Gli stadi compositivi previi (*Vorstufen*) — che non vengono negati a priori — sono secondo lui spesso più incoerenti del testo canonico che questi vorrebbero migliorare, a motivo della sua apparente incoerenza. Purtroppo, la polemica nei confronti di un approccio storico-critico unidimensionale si spinge un po' troppo oltre. Di fatto un serio approccio diacronico al testo non ha l'ardire di voler migliorare l'esegesi del testo finale, ma quella di ricostruirne scientificamente il processo di formazione letterario. Il "sommo poeta" (*hochstehender Poet*) ipotizzato da Fischer che, utilizzando tradizioni e materiali preesistenti, ha composto il testo, è un'ipotesi non solo ardita, ma di fatto anche semplicistica. Per fortuna l'idea di Mosè come autore viene velocemente rifiutata. Il fatto che per Fischer questo poeta possa essere addirittura responsabile della composizione che parte da Genesi 1 e arriva a 2 Re 25 — secondo il commentario, il *terminus post quem* della composizione — non può adeguatamente essere motivata alla fine di un commentario su Genesi 1–11. Fischer introduce tuttavia questa figura, che sarebbe stata attiva nel periodo del postesilio persiano (VI–IV secolo). L'idea suggestiva ricorda da vicino quella del "deuteronomista" di Noth. Entrambe le posizioni lasciano però un senso di incompiutezza. La situazione è più complessa e problemi complessi raramente hanno una soluzione semplice e univoca.

In ogni caso, Fischer decide di non preoccuparsi della dimensione diacronica: il testo viene presentato e analizzato nella sua dimensione sincronica. I momenti di difficoltà testuale sono accorgimenti letterari che hanno lo scopo di trasmettere un significato particolare. Sono pietre d'inciampo all'interno di un percorso lineare con la funzione di dare alla narrazione una chiara dinamicità e una vivacità altrimenti non trasmissibile. Fischer si fa così interprete di una scuola esegetica

che ancora fatica ad essere accettata e che sembra “funzionare” solo a condizione di aderire ai suoi presupposti ermeneutici. La complessità del testo finale di Genesi 1–11 rispecchia naturalmente una genesi diacronica complessa, che Fischer accetta, ma che non ritiene di dover sviscerare per comprendere il significato del testo finale.

Lo scopo di una recensione non è quello di commentare che cosa si sarebbe voluto leggere, ma ciò che si legge. Fischer è coerente nel presentare le sue idee e nel corso del commento non si sofferma mai a discutere problemi connessi alla stratificazione compositiva del testo.

Un altro aspetto che nel contesto di un commentario scientifico colpisce è il riferimento a un processo ermeneutico che si potrebbe definire quasi “ispirato”. Espressioni come “capire il libro della Genesi è come nuotare in un mare senza fine — può riuscire solo con l’aiuto di Dio” (43) e come “la rivelazione divina è un dono all’umanità [...] i suoi testi sono così ‘puri’ e ‘veri’ che [...] provocano stupore [...] è un privilegio potersene occupare” (11) trasmettono una precomprensione “particolare” del ruolo del testo e del commentatore.

La valutazione al commento verso per verso di Genesi 1–11 — realizzato con o senza l’aiuto ispirante di Dio — non può che essere positiva. La competenza mostrata sia dal punto di vista filologico e grammaticale, che da quello dell’analisi formale e strutturale fino alla presentazione del messaggio teologico è davvero grandiosa. La conoscenza del testo biblico e i continui riferimenti intertestuali non possono semplicemente essere ricondotti a un sapiente uso di un *software* per cercare le concordanze; sono piuttosto frutto di un decennale preciso lavoro di studio del testo. Naturalmente, non mancano i dovuti riferimenti al mondo dell’Oriente Antico. Il testo biblico viene inserito in una dimensione linguistica mitica, che trasmette il proprio innovativo messaggio teologico proprio nel momento in cui si percepiscono le differenze.

Anche la cronologia e le indicazioni delle età dei patriarchi non sono da pensare come reali, ma vengono spiegate attraverso complessi calcoli e sofisticati simbolismi. Naturalmente la descrizione dell’attività creativa di Dio non risponde ai criteri delle scienze naturali e non rappresenta una soluzione a fronte della domanda scientifica, una comprensione fondamentalista del testo va chiaramente rifiutata. La scienza può aiutare a capire il testo della creazione, ma non in un senso agnostico: la grandezza del cosmo lascia intravedere piuttosto un Dio creatore che è ancora più grande. Il tema è ripreso da Fischer alla fine del volume, in un *excursus*, dove lo si discute in maniera fedele alla posizione sostenuta dalla chiesa. Anche la visione teista viene eliminata senza grandi discussioni: scienza e fede sono due modi differenti di affrontare la tematica dell’origine del cosmo. La Genesi ne mostra un’interpretazione, non ne descrive il divenire dal punto di vista scientifico.

Dal punto di vista strettamente strutturale Fischer segue la suddivisione del testo ebraico in *setumot* e *petuchot*, considera le formule delle *toledot* e le completa con criteri di carattere letterario. Il risultato finale è una suddivisione in sei parti con un prologo. Il commento è invece suddiviso in tredici unità contenutistiche di lunghezze molto differenti ed organizzato in capitoli che seguono sempre la stessa struttura: dopo un’ampia presentazione delle indicazioni bibliografiche, segue una traduzione (libera e leggibile) corredata da note lessicali. Fischer, che ha difeso contro gran parte della comunità accademica internazionale la priorità del testo masoretico del libro di Geremia, anche per la Genesi dà la priorità alla

versione masoretica, a fronte della varietà delle tradizioni testuali. Il testo masoretico è quello che viene tradotto ed analizzato.

Dopo la traduzione, si propone un'introduzione con la delimitazione del passo analizzato, la sua struttura, il genere letterario e lo sfondo storico. Il centro contenutistico del commentario è dato però dall'analisi versetto per versetto che non solo risponde ai criteri di un profondo studio analitico, ma offre anche un vero e proprio tesoro per quel che riguarda la comprensione del testo. Preciso, completo ed esauriente, Fischer presenta, spiega, evidenzia le connessioni del testo come pochi altri esegeti sanno fare. Quando la problematica è complessa o richiede un respiro più ampio non esita ad utilizzare la formula dell'*excursus* (tredici in tutto). Oltre a 21 immagini che illustrano i paralleli con la letteratura e le concezioni dell'Oriente Antico, ben 29 diagrammi descrivono plasticamente soprattutto strutture o processi di sviluppo diacronico del testo. Un plauso a Ernst Ehrenreich, che ha contribuito alla realizzazione e ideazione concettuale dei diagrammi. Le parole chiave a margine del commento come anche gli esaurienti indici al termine del volume aiutano nell'utilizzo pratico del commentario.

Leggendolo si giunge facilmente alla conclusione che il momento centrale dell'attività esegetica di Fischer non si risolve nell'analisi filologica o strutturale del testo. Questa è sempre funzionale alla ricerca del significato. Mentre però sul piano filologico e strutturale la sua opinione è non solo qualificata, ma completa e indiscutibile dal punto di vista argomentativo, le sue conclusioni teologiche possono essere discusse anche in maniera controversa.

Fischer tende sempre a "salvare" il Dio biblico, come il Dio ideale e positivo anche a fronte dei problemi che si riconoscono in Genesi 1–11: Dio che non solo crea, ma anche distrugge; non solo aiuta, ma anche privilegia; non solo benedice, ma anche maledice. Forse manca un po' di spirito critico. Anche la spiegazione dell'albero della conoscenza, o della scelta di non accettare l'offerta di Caino o la presentazione di un'antropologia decisamente equilibrata, che non considera la problematica di genere e — come già sottolineato — la particolare attenzione alla dimensione spirituale dell'esegesi possono essere naturalmente discusse a lungo.

Ciò non toglie che il commentario di Fischer sia un valido strumento per lo studio, ma anche per la pastorale. Per Fischer non solo le caratteristiche letterarie del testo, ma anche la sua teologia sono un invito continuo a lasciarsi mettere in discussione. In questo senso, nonostante la mole impressionante e il carattere indubbiamente scientifico, il commentario è uno strumento utile per un vasto pubblico, anche non specialistico.

Fischer lascia che diverse voci siano libere di esprimersi, non solo quelle che lui preferisce; in questo modo, lascia al lettore la possibilità di formarsi una visione critica personale. Questo vale sia per le questioni di carattere filologico o grammaticale, sia per le problematiche inerenti alla teologia biblica.

Fischer consegna alla comunità scientifica internazionale una pietra miliare dell'esegesi di Genesi 1–11, ma anche un degno "proemio" alla serie edita dalla casa editrice Herder. Con questo volume non solo si offre una chiave di lettura al prosieguito del commento alla Genesi (cc. 12–36), ma anche a tutta la collana.

Erasmus GASS, *Die Landverteilung im Josuabuch. Eine literarhistorische Analyse von Josua 13–19* (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 132). Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2019. vii-437 p. 16.5 × 23.5. €139,00

Erasmus Gass has written a timely monograph on the literary formation of Joshua 13–19. The focus of research for much of the twentieth century concentrated on the geographical source documents in Joshua 13–19 identified initially by A. Alt, which he described as the system of tribal borders from the pre-monarchy period and the list of place-names linking Judah and Benjamin into a single territory from the period of the reign of Josiah (e.g., “Judas Gaue unter Josia”, *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, Band 2 [München 1953] 276-288; and “Das System der Stammesgrenzen im Buche Josua”, *ibid.*, 193-202). Research in the wake of Alt’s proposal concentrated on the date and the purpose of the source documents, based on the historical evaluation of the geographical details (e.g., M. Noth, *Das Buch Josua* [HAT 7; Tübingen ²1971]; R.S. Hess; “Asking Historical Questions of Joshua 13–19: Recent Discussion Concerning the Date of the Boundary Lists”, *Faith, Tradition, and History* [eds. A.R. Millard et al.] [Winona Lake, IN 1994] 191-205; Z. Kallai, *Historical Geography of the Bible. The Tribal Territories of Israel* [Jerusalem 1986]; N. Na’aman, *Borders and Districts in Biblical Historiography. Seven Studies in Biblical Geographical Lists* [Jerusalem 1986]; N.K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh. A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050 B.C.E.* [Maryknoll, NY 1979]; F.M. Cross and F.E. Wright, “The Boundary and Province Lists of the Kingdom of Judah”, *JBL* 75 [1956] 202-226). In the late twentieth century, research shifted from establishing the date and historical setting of the documents to the formative role of late postexilic redactors in composing Joshua 13–19 through inner-biblical interpretation of Numbers 26–36. The shift in focus yielded a wide range of reconstructions of composition (e.g., A.G. Auld, *Joshua Retold. Old Testament Studies* [Edinburgh 1998]; J.C. de Vos, *Das Los Judas. Über Entstehung und Ziele der Landbeschreibung in Josua 15* [VTSup 95; Leiden 2003]; E. Cortese, *Josua 13–21. Ein priesterschriftlicher Abschnitt im deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk* [OBO 94; Freiburg 1985]; R. Achenbach, *Die Vollendung der Tora. Studien zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Numeribuches im Kontext von Hexateuch und Pentateuch* [BZABR 3; Wiesbaden 2003]). Gass situates his monograph at this time of transition, with the aim of clarifying the task of redaction criticism with the following methodological guidelines: (1) the study of the redaction-critical growth of Joshua 13–19 must be evaluated within the larger literary context of the Hexateuch or Enneateuch; (2) it must be based on formal elements in the text and not on literary content (*Tendenzkritik*), especially changes in the geographical details which do not provide insight into the overall aim of the redactors; and (3) the MT and the LXX must both be included in the study of redaction criticism.

E. Gass follows recent redaction-critical studies by relating the composition of Numbers 26–36 and Joshua 13–19; he argues that the original version of Joshua 13–19 functioned as an appendix to Numbers, rather than as the second half of the book of Joshua. The hypothesis leads to the conclusion that Joshua 13–19 is not integrated well in the account of the conquest in Joshua 1–12, and, therefore, that it may be interpreted in isolation from its larger literary context in the book of Joshua. The change in the literary context of the tribal distribution of the land

from Numbers to Joshua was tied to the function of the book of Joshua in creating a Hexateuch through the combination of the central themes from Deuteronomy and the Priestly literature: Joshua 1–12 was tied to Deuteronomy and may even represent an early version of the conquest (DtrL); while Joshua 13–19 was oriented to the Priestly literature on land possession in Numbers 26–36. The evaluation of Joshua as two separate bodies of literature combined to create a Hexateuch provides the framework for tracing the composition of Joshua 13–19 in isolation from the conquest of the land in Joshua 1–12.

The study consists of ten chapters, in which the focus is restricted for the most part to the literary framework of Joshua 13–19, rather than the geographical descriptions of the tribal territories. In the introduction (Chapter 1), Gass provides a helpful review of past diachronic and synchronic studies; the review traces the past emphasis on geography as the basis for evaluating composition before turning to redaction-critical research that links Joshua 13–19 with Numbers 26–36, especially Num 34,2-12. Chapter 2 is a reconstruction of the original Priestly source document of seven tribes (Judah, 15,2-12.20; Ephraim, 16,5-8; Benjamin, 18,12-20; Zebulun, 19,10b-14.16*; Issachar, 19,18*.22*.23*; Asher, 19,25*.26*.28*.30; Naphtali, 19,33-34.39; * = partial version), based on a comprehensive analysis of language in Joshua 13–19 and in Numbers 34. The original context of the Priestly source likely followed Numbers 34.

The identification of the Priestly Source provides the starting point for tracing its transformation in number (from seven to twelve tribes) and in context (from Numbers to Joshua) through several stages of composition. The Priestly Source underwent an initial Priestly Redaction tied to Numbers 26; 33; it combined the Priestly Source of seven tribes with the document of place-names identified by Alt (evident most clearly in the description of Judah [Joshua 15] and of Benjamin [Josh 18,11-28]); it also provided a narrative context with early versions of Josh 18,1-10; 14,1-2; 19,49.51. The Late Priestly Redaction was influenced by Num 34,16-29; this redaction worked with a ten-tribe system, while also expanding the narrative framework. The DTR Narrative Redaction inserted the tradition of Caleb (Josh 14,6-15; 15,13-16) and of Joseph (Josh 17,14-18). The Priestly-DTR Redaction created the concept of the twelve-tribes, giving rise to the present place of Josh 18,1-10 in Joshua 13–19 where it functions as the introduction to the seven remaining tribes; this redaction also placed emphasis on Judah and Ephraim-Manasseh; the exclusion of the Levites from the tribal land system; and it divided Manasseh into two parts creating the two and one-half and nine and one-half division of the tribes. Less significant influences on composition include a series of Priestly and late-Deuteronomistic glosses.

The narrative framework of Joshua 13–19 provides the key to identify the stages of composition. Thus, Chapters 3 and 4 concentrate on the narrative introductions. Chapter 3 is focused on the account of the survey of the land directed to seven tribes (Josh 18,1-10); Chapter 4 targets the introduction (Josh 14,1-5) to the distribution of land to Judah (Joshua 15) and to Joseph (Joshua 16–17), as well as the conclusion (Josh 19,49-51) to the entire account of land distribution. Josh 18,1-10 is especially important because it contains the entire history of composition and reinterpretation. The text originally functioned as the introduction to the seven-tribe account of land distribution (18,3aa.4*.5*.8*.9*), but, with the eventual emergence of the ten-tribe and then the twelve-tribe systems, the original text underwent a history of redaction. The Priestly Redaction included the setting of Shiloh,

the tent of meeting, the motif of subduing and the lot in Priestly Redaction (18,1.4*.5*.8.10*); the Dtr Redaction emphasized Joshua (18,4*.10b); and the Priestly-Dtr Redaction included the motif of seven remaining tribes, their “slackness” and the absence of land to the Levites (18,2.3*.7) and a change of context, to where it now functions as the introduction to the seven remaining tribes in Joshua 13–19. The introduction (Josh 14,1-5) and the conclusion (Josh 19,49-51) mirror many of the same signs of redaction as Josh 18,1-10 (e.g., Priestly Redaction, 14,1a.2*; 19,49a.51b; Late Priestly Redaction, 14,1b; 19,51a; Priestly-Dtr Redaction, 14,2*.3; 19,51bβ; and Dtr 19,49b-50; and Glosses, 14,4b).

Chapters Five and Six examine the literary development surrounding the tribes of Ephraim (Josh 16,1-10) and Manasseh (Josh 17,1-13), from the singular reference to Ephraim in the Priestly source (Josh 16,5b-8; 17,1b*.7b.9a.ba.10a.15*.16*), where it functioned as one of the seven tribes, to the complex relationship of Ephraim, Manasseh and the sons of Joseph in the present form of the text. Chapter Seven evaluates the narratives about Caleb (Josh 14,6-15; 15,13-19) and the complaint of Joseph (17,14-18), which represent source material that was taken up into the Deuteronomistic composition of the book of Joshua. The monograph concludes with the study of the theme of the remaining land in Joshua 13 (Chapter 8); the inclusion of the eastern tribes in Josh 13,15-33 (Chapter 9); and a conclusion (Chapter 10).

The research on Joshua 13–19 is exhaustive. Gass provides the history of interpretation to each text under study, as well as the text-critical problems that may influence the interpretation of composition. Each chapter also includes a careful exegesis of the entire passage and clear conclusions. The appendices provide further helpful illustrations that encapsulate the central insights from the research. There were two questions that lingered for me in reading the monograph. How would the composition of Joshua 13–19 change if the larger context for interpretation was the book of Joshua rather than the Hexateuch? And how might the incorporation of the geographical material as the literary work of author(s) influence the study of composition? But these are not the questions of Gass, who has certainly achieved his goal of providing a thorough redaction-critical study of Joshua 13–19 within the larger literary context of the formation of the Hexateuch.

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Kenneth BERGLAND, *Reading as a Disclosure of the Thoughts of the Heart*. Proto-Halakhic Reuse and Appropriation between Torah and the Prophets (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte 23). Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2019. xvi-362 p. € 98,00

R.M. Davidson was the first advisor of this revised edition of a thesis presented to the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University (Berrien Springs, MI) in 2018. Its first purpose is to inquire about a procedure in biblical literature, called here “reuse”, but related to intertextuality, inner-biblical exegesis,

or even re-written Bible. The field of inquiry is limited to the reuse of legal texts in prophetic literature, especially Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

After a short introduction (1-4), Part One (5-106) develops methodological questions, as is usual in a dissertation. Chapter 1 explains what the context of the study is, namely “The Debate on the Relative Priority of Torah and the Prophets” (7-14). K. Bergland (KB) sides with Kaufmann rather than with Wellhausen in defending “the chronological precedence of Torah over the prophets” (12). This is supported by the phenomenon of prophetic quotations of or allusions to earlier texts. M. Fishbane, by far the most often quoted author in this work, is one of the main sources of inspiration. Recent linguistic studies are also invoked to buttress KB’s position. He follows Hurvitz, Hornkohl, and Joosten rather than Young and Rezetko. Eventually, KB prefers to speak of complementarity between legal corpora instead of replacement or supersessionism.

The chapters that follow are also dedicated to general issues. Chapter 2 (15-71) proposes an acceptable definition of Torah as “Covenantal Instruction”. We steer — as in the rest of the dissertation — tacking, often windward, between opinions and discussions, to reach after a tiring journey something like a safe harbor. Or, to say with L. Alonso Schökel, we produce fruit, but the reader is not spared the sweat necessary to produce it.

On the nature of biblical legal collections, KB is of the opinion that biblical laws are not positive or prescriptive (29). They are a source of wisdom and inspiration rather than rules meant for literal application. Nonetheless, when legal texts are quoted, “We find combined both exact correspondence and creative freedom in proto-halakhic reuse in the [Hebrew Bible]” (30).

Other problems are broached, such as the contradiction between the main legal corpora and the immutability of the law, related to the immutability of YHWH. YHWH, as legislator, has the right to correct or modify the laws that he promulgated. Eventually, there is a constant “dialogue between a holy and righteous life and the holy and righteous YHWH” (67). For this reason, laws are considered to be part of a “normative covenantal instruction”, to safeguard at the same time their non-prescriptive and their normative character. What matters is not the observance of the law, but faithfulness to YHWH, the lawgiver.

A critical reader may raise some questions about this chapter. For instance, when were biblical laws integrated into a covenantal frame? In the ANE, law collections and vassal treaties are two different types of documents, anchored in two different contexts, written in different styles and following different literary conventions. Is it different in the Hebrew Bible? Second, laws are usually promulgated by kings in the ANE, and we have good reasons to believe that this was the case in ancient Israel as well. The disappearance of the monarchy had obviously important consequences for the status of biblical laws. The formula “as it is written” — followed in some cases by a literal quotation of a law — appears mostly in the Books of Ezra – Nehemiah and in Chronicles. Is this just by chance? The end of the chapter (67-71) lists criteria to be used in determining cases of reuse and the direction of dependence. They are based on similarities and dissimilarities between parallel passages (71).

Chapter 3 (73-106) introduces some necessary nuances to what is defined as “creative and exact reuse” or “repetition with variation” (cf. 73) in studying scribal training and practices in the ANE. Much of what is said here can be found elsewhere. KB insists on the fact that we are dealing with a culture “where

text-supported memorized reuse was commonly practiced" (106). In the same chapter, KB briefly "survey[s] the question of orality, writing, and memory in six books containing the passages under study, namely Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel" (87). We find at the end of the chapter a catalogue of indicators for establishing cases of memorized reuse in biblical literature (102-106), most of them stemming from previous works in the field.

The next chapters (4-8) are dedicated to the study of five cases of possible proto-halakhic reuse of legal texts in prophetic literature (Part Two, 107-281). The texts are Jer 3,1-10 and Deut 24,1-4 (Chapter 4, "Divorce and Remarriage", 109-127); Jer 17,19-27 with Exod 20,8-11 and Deut 5,12-15 (Chapter 5, "Sabbath Instructions", 129-150); Jer 34,8-22 with Exod 21,2-11; Lev 25,10.39-46; and Deut 15,12-18 (Chapter 6, "Manumission Instructions", 151-217); Isaiah 58 and Leviticus 25 which KB connects with the Day of Atonement and the Jubilee (Chapter 7, "Instructions on Fasting", 219-252); and, in Chapter 8 (253-281), two more elusive cases of "Pastiches of Torah", Jer 7,1-15, Jeremiah's Temple Sermon (254-268), and Ezekiel 18, a discussion of personal responsibility (269-279).

This part of the work is challenging, and even more difficult to summarize than the first chapters. KB follows each time the same pattern, at least in chapters 4-6. After an introduction and a summary of the history of research, he examines the possibility of reuse of legal texts in the given passage. He then establishes the direction of dependence and finally shows how the prophetic text appropriates the legal text. Coming to Jeremiah 7 and Ezekiel 18, the method changes and becomes more allusive. Only the combination or accumulation of elements leads to the conclusion that we have in both chapters a "pastiche of Torah".

The main conclusions of these chapters are three, and the first two contradict Wellhausen's system. First, Torah precedes the prophets since in every case KB forcefully demonstrates that the prophetic texts depend on the legal texts found in the Torah. Second, the chronological order of the Pentateuchal collections of laws coincide with the canonical order, i.e. Exodus precedes Leviticus which, in its turn, precedes Deuteronomy (cf. B. Kilchör). A third conclusion is that the prophetic passages strive to prolong, expand and radicalize the laws. KB speaks of a "tendency towards an expansionistic reading in the prophetic passages of Torah" (285). In sum, the dissertation under review goes beyond Wellhausen and finds solutions to critical question in the canon itself. *Scriptura sui ipsius interpres*.

About this question of chronology, in a 1993 article on A. Kuenen, A. Rofé wrote a reflection worth quoting. For him, affirming with Kaufmann that P precedes D would amount to claiming "that the Bourbonian restoration in 1815 preceded the French revolution." *Sapienti sat*.

The third part, "Unscientific Postscript on Reading as a Disclosure of the Thoughts of the Heart" (Chapter 9, 285-304) is more of a hermeneutical nature and adopts now and then an almost homiletical tone. With the help of Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard, KB unfolds "what God says through the text to us as readers" (289) and explains that "the text is grounded in life" (293). The chapter is structured according to John 14,6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life".

All in all, there is much to learn from this dissertation, and in many ways. There are also, as usual, some possible areas of disagreement. On the Decalogue (129-132), for instance, one wonders why KB does not mention Frank-Lothar's epoch-making thesis, according to which the Deuteronomic Decalogue is more ancient than the Decalogue in Exodus 20. See F.-L. Hossfeld, *Der Dekalog*. Seine späten

Fassungen, die originale Komposition und seine Vorstufen (OBO 45; Göttingen 1982). Nothing is said about the textual difficulty in Exod 19,25 and 20,1, for instance. The Sabbath in the Deuteronomic Decalogue with its reference to the experience of the Exodus is also much more integrated into its immediate context than the Sabbath commandment in the Exodus Decalogue with its reference to creation in Genesis 1.

In several instances, KB's argumentation is debatable. First of all, there is the question of style. The accumulation of expressions such as "it seems", "it may", "it might", "it can", "it could" or adverbs such as "possibly", "likely", and so on, gives the impression that we are often moving on shaky ground. KB acknowledges that his arguments are not always rock-solid, but — in his opinion — their accumulation must carry conviction. Perhaps, but increasing the number of mediocre musicians seldom makes a good orchestra.

For instance, KB insists on a possible wordplay between the root דבר, "word" in Deut 24,1, and ערבי, "Arab" in Jer 3,2 (119-124), to reach the sobering conclusion that it is "most likely a case of paronomasia" and "a possible word-play" (124). Or not?

In Jeremiah 34, on the one hand, and in Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15, on the other, we have clearly two very different situations. In Jeremiah 34, the manumission of slaves (1) is the result of a royal edict; (2) this edict is not connected with a cycle of six/seven years; (3) it is part of a covenant concluded by the king with the people in Jerusalem, not the implementation of a law; (4) it is abolished by those who promulgated it without further ado. Moreover, Jeremiah's oracle creates an antithesis between Zedekiah's edict and a previous covenant concluded by YHWH with Israel, at the time of the Exodus, a covenant that stipulates a regular manumission of slaves (Jer 34,12-14). Does therefore Jeremiah 34 depend on Deuteronomy 15 or can it not be simply one of the many examples of a widespread practice in the ANE, also attested in Exodus 21, Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15?

KB reads Isaiah 58 in the context of the Jubilee and the Day of Atonement. This is possible, but is it really proven? To mention only one point, fasting is a very common practice, and not only in ancient Israel (cf. 225-235). It is probably mentioned in Lev 23,26-32, although the text speaks only of "afflicting oneself". There are however clearer instances on different occasions, such as Zech 7,1-5; 8,18-19, that speak of fasting for the anniversary of the destruction of the temple; one fasts to invoke God's mercy in Jer 36,6.9; Jonah 3,5; cf. 1 Kgs 21,9.12. Fasting is surely more frequent than the texts speaking of it! Why should we privilege Lev 23,26-32 in our reading of Isaiah 58?

To sum up the mixed impression left by the reading of this taxing dissertation, the reader will find in it treasures of information, plenty of bibliographical references, lengthy quotations of recent works (sometimes repeated, as on 203-204 and 207-208), informed sections on the history of research, numerous *status quaestionis*, lists of biblical quotations, richly documented footnotes, and precise analyses of texts. I think, however, and to use again an image, that the quality of the work is more in the single notes than in the music.

Novum Testamentum

Markus LAU, *Der gekreuzigte Triumphator. Eine motivkritische Studie zum Markusevangelium* (Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus / Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments 114). Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019. 694 p. 16.5 × 24. €120,00

Professeur d'exégèse du NT à l'Université de Fribourg en Suisse, Markus Lau (ML) publie sa thèse de doctorat (soutenue en 2015, trois fois primée en 2016-2017) dans un volume imposant à l'écriture soignée. Cette recherche s'inscrit dans le champ des «études impériales» selon lesquelles Rome constitue un contexte socio-culturel significatif des textes du NT. ML s'intéresse à l'évangile de Marc pour montrer que son auteur a écrit certaines sections de son récit en faisant référence de manière consciente mais codée, sous la forme d'allusions, au monde et aux réalités des triomphes romains — ces processions spectaculaires au cours desquelles un général vainqueur défilait à travers la Ville, accompagné du butin de guerre et de ses troupes, pour y être acclamé comme «triomphateur». L'enjeu de la thèse est double: prouver la plausibilité de la présence du motif du triomphe en arrière-fond de certaines scènes de Marc et expliciter l'effet produit par ces allusions sur le lecteur capable de les déchiffrer.

L'ouvrage se compose assez naturellement de quatre parties. La première (21-143) dresse le *status quaestionis* et aborde les questions incontournables d'herméneutique. En effet, traitant du phénomène littéraire de l'allusion, ML s'expose au reproche déjà formulé à l'encontre de ses prédécesseurs sur ce sujet (cf. T.E. Schmidt, «The Crucifixion Narrative and the Roman Triumphal Procession», *NTS* 41 [1995] 1-18), à savoir qu'il s'agirait de rapprochements «*far-fetched* (tirés par les cheveux)» (68-69).

La seconde partie (145-312) décrit, de manière théorique mais non moins fortement documentée, le rituel des triomphes romains. On y apprend beaucoup. ML ne se contente pas de synthétiser les sources secondaires mais analyse des documents de première main: textes littéraires, sources épigraphiques et numismatiques (illustrations à l'appui). Il réfléchit également à la fonction sociale de ce rituel et illustre sa présence dans la littérature latine (Ovide, Sénèque, Epictète, Suétone). Signalons quelques imprécisions dans ce paragraphe (267-297) du fait que ML se réfère parfois uniquement à des traductions en langue allemande sans vérifier le latin. Ainsi dans l'*Ars Amatoria* 220 d'Ovide (273-274), l'expression latine «*montes quaeue ferantur aquae*» est traduite par: «*Gebirge und Strom, die im Triumph sie dort führen*». En commentant que «le vocable 'triomphe' fait clairement référence au rituel», ML semble ne pas avoir remarqué que le mot «triomphe» est absent du texte latin. Il en est même au sujet du *De vita beata* 24,4 de Sénèque (281-283) avec l'expression «*exornaturus victoris superbi ac feri pompam*» / «*um den Triumphzug eines stolzen, rohen Siegers aufzuwerten*» suivie d'un commentaire identique au précédent. Ou encore chez Suétone, *Nero* 25,1 (291-296), avec l'expression «*ovantium ritu* (à la manière d'une ovation)» / «*wie bei einem richtigen Triumphzug* (comme pour une vrai triomphe)», alors que la différence entre «ovation» et «triomphe» a été précisée précédemment (164-165). Enfin, les discussions autour de l'expression «triompher sur (*über*)» (244-45, 281-282) devraient également être revues car

elles ne se réfèrent pas toutes à la même expression latine. Cela dit, ces imprécisions ne changent pas les conclusions sur la présence du motif du triomphe sous la forme de «motif pré-textuel» servant de comparaison ou de métaphore au sujet traité par les textes cités.

Parvenu à mi-parcours, ML peut se tourner vers Marc dans une troisième partie substantielle (313-583) qui analyse successivement huit péricopes évangéliques avant de mener une neuvième étude sur l'*exousia* de Jésus en contre-point de l'*imperium* romain. Partant de la scène de la dérision au prétoire, ML y reconnaît une concentration d'allusions au rituel du triomphe qui forment un véritable «cluster» de références codées et ouvrent ainsi un nouvel horizon de compréhension au lecteur. Plus précisément c'est à la phase préparatoire d'un triomphe que l'écriture de Mc 15,16-20 ferait allusion, lorsque le général vainqueur, après avoir dormi au prétoire, saluait ses troupes au champ de Mars avant d'être littéralement métamorphosé en «trionphateur» et image vivante de Jupiter sur terre: visage peint en rouge, vêtue de la *toga purpurea* et *alba vestis triumphalis*, remise d'une couronne de lauriers sur la tête. ML remarque que la précision du «prétoire» (ἔσω τῆς αὐλῆς ὃ ἐστὶν πραιτώριον) est maladroite bien qu'intentionnelle et introduit un latinisme. Ce genre de tensions textuelles (changement de code linguistique, invraisemblance historique) serait un indicateur de la référence codée à une autre réalité. Il en est de même de la présence de la «cohorte» (480-1000 hommes!) ou encore du «manteau de pourpre» extrêmement onéreux. Il importe de souligner que Marc ne raconte pas précisément un triomphe, mais qu'il utilise ce rituel de manière littérairement fonctionnelle: en développant une métaphore à partir d'allusions, «il plonge le chemin de croix de Jésus dans l'atmosphère d'un triomphe» (591). Lue dans cette perspective, la scène du prétoire fait jouer un double rôle à Jésus: celui du triomphateur et celui du roi prisonnier que l'on traînait dans le butin de guerre, accompagné d'un *titulus*, avant de l'exécuter (étranglé) au Tullianum. Dans la suite du récit, le jeu des allusions se confirme à certains détails: la mise en route de la procession, signalée par un verbe singulier (ἐξάγω); l'arrivée au Golgotha, «lieu du crâne» — étymologie également possible pour *Capitolium*; le tirage au sort des vêtements en écho à la *spolia opima* des rois vaincus; le *titulus*; la mort de Jésus et sa communication à Pilate par le centurion. Parvenu à Mc 16,1-8, ML rappelle comment cette finale ouverte invite le lecteur à reprendre sa lecture depuis le début. Dans cette «nouvelle lecture» de Marc 1-15 se vérifie la «magie des allusions» (65): dès lors que le motif du triomphe a été repéré, il permet d'intégrer, en leur donnant du sens, certains détails du texte considérés jusque-là comme peu significatifs. Ainsi, les 5000 hommes de la première multiplication des pains renverraient à l'une des conditions du *ius triumphalis*, à savoir le fait d'avoir abattu un minimum de 5000 ennemis; l'*exousia* de Jésus à l'*imperium* octroyé par le Sénat au général vainqueur; tandis que dans les vêtements blancs de la Transfiguration serait déjà anticipée la métamorphose du triomphateur (*alba vestis triumphalis*).

Quant à la dernière partie (585-620) elle ressaisit les principaux résultats autour des deux fils rouges de cette étude: la technique de l'allusion et l'effet produit sur le lecteur.

Au terme de ce parcours reconnaissons que la thèse défendue est suggestive. Les éléments textuels convoqués sont finement articulés les uns aux autres et, en aucun cas, ML n'entend imposer sa lecture; il parie plutôt sur la polysémie du texte pour l'enrichir d'un nouveau niveau de sens, dont il pense néanmoins que sa présence est intentionnelle dans le chef de Marc. Cela donne à penser que si

un chrétien des années 70 avait assisté à Rome au triomphe des trois Flaviens avant d'écouter le récit de Marc, il pouvait établir des rapprochements déroutant mais surtout entendre comme un contre-chant dans l'évangile: une invitation à prendre ses distances à l'égard de Rome, une critique ironique des prétentions de cette dernière à créer par ses rites des hommes illustres (une «*Großer-Mann-Maschine*»), et surtout la possibilité de reconnaître en Jésus, non pas le vrai triomphateur en lieu et place de César, mais plutôt un Seigneur dont le «pouvoir», au lieu d'être orienté vers sa propre gloire au détriment de la vie de beaucoup, était un service de tous au prix de sa propre vie — autrement dit un «triomphateur crucifié», lequel invitait désormais quiconque à prendre place dans son cortège en adoptant ces mêmes manières de vivre.

Une question cependant demeure: jusqu'à quel point la distorsion inévitable que subit le motif codé est-elle acceptable pour que ce dernier soit encore reconnaissable? Ou encore, si des éléments significatifs du récit ne sont pas pris en charge par le motif, l'affirmation de sa présence est-elle encore pertinente? Il nous semble important, en guise de réflexion conclusive, de poser la question au sujet de la crucifixion. Si celle-ci est mentionnée dans le titre de l'ouvrage, «Le triomphateur crucifié», elle ne reçoit en réalité aucune lumière dans le cadre du rituel des triomphes. Dans son récit, explique ML, «Marc ne pouvait tout simplement pas changer le mode de l'exécution [du Christ], la crucifixion, en un étranglement, comme cela aurait été plus convenable dans le cadre d'allusions au triomphe» (595). Si le motif du triomphe enrichit d'une harmonique nouvelle le sens de la *mort* du Christ, à la fois vainqueur et vaincu, glorieux et serviteur de tous, en rapprochant cette mort de la manière paradoxale dont il a usé de son pouvoir (*exousia* / *imperium*) reçu de Dieu, il ne dit rien en revanche sur la *crucifixion* en tant que telle. Tandis que l'exécution des roi-prisonniers avait lieu rapidement, au Tullianum, de manière privée, par étranglement, la crucifixion du Christ, elle, est un évènement public, un évènement qui dure, et dont l'effet n'est pas seulement de mettre à mort la victime mais aussi de la dégrader totalement. En réalité, les crucifixions étaient elles-mêmes des quasi-rituels, visant à mettre en scène des parodies d'exaltation sociale ainsi que l'a montré J. Marcus («Crucifixion as Parodic Exaltation», *JBL* 125 [2006] 73-87). Pour les Romains, en effet, les peines subies par les condamnés étaient des «charades fatales», au sens où elles représentaient (*mimesis*) de manière codée, sous la forme de moquerie, le type de crime dont la victime était accusée. Dans cette vision des choses, l'association de la crucifixion à la prétention de royauté n'est donc pas spécifiquement chrétienne, mais les auteurs du NT ont pu jouer de ce rapprochement paradoxal et obscurément présent dans le déroulement des crucifixions, de sorte que la crucifixion du Christ participe du dévoilement de son identité véritable. En somme, le grand défi auquel les premiers chrétiens ont été confrontés fut de donner du sens au paradoxe absolu d'un messie crucifié, d'autant que cela n'était pas annoncé en clair dans les Écritures d'Israël. S'il n'est pas à douter que les écrivains du NT auront mis, dans cette épreuve, toutes les ressources et la créativité dont ils disposaient, en revanche, lorsqu'une nouvelle clé herméneutique est suggérée mais qu'elle n'apporte pas de véritable lumière à ce paradoxe, il nous est plus difficile de penser qu'elle ait été explicitement voulue par les auteurs de ces textes.

Sarah H. CASSON, *Textual Signposts in the Argument of Romans. A Relevance-Theory Approach* (Early Christianity and Its Literature 25). Atlanta, GA, SBL Press, 2019. xviii-319 p. 15 × 23. €44.95

This book has its origins in a Bible translation project in minority languages in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In this publication Sarah Casson (hereafter SC) combines Bible translation and NT studies, demonstrating the value of linguistics for interpreting Paul's letters. SC applies the notion of procedural meaning to the Greek connective γάρ in the Letter to the Romans in an attempt to resolve some scholarly disputes over particular verses (see, for example, 1,8; 4,2; 10,4; 15,8). Thus, SC seeks to clarify the identity of Paul's addressees and the main argument of the letter. The published project was supervised by Edward Adams (King's College of London), and examined by John M.G. Barclay and Sarah Whittle.

Why does γάρ deserve such attention? This particle generally means "for" and it is interpreted as causal or explanatory, but in Romans it also appears in many contested passages where its meaning can be confusing, and its translation cannot always be "for". SC believes that applying the notion of procedural meaning to the Greek connective γάρ may clarify these passages. After explaining its relevance, SC introduces this research by means of a *status quaestionis*, distinguishing three accounts of γάρ: traditional, linguistic, and cognitive.

SC's study of the traditional accounts includes the grammatical approach, the treatment of γάρ in the more important commentaries on Romans, and some recent monographs. The traditional approach considers that γάρ in Romans bears the same meaning as the classical Greek (causal or explanatory). SC divides the commentaries on Romans in two main streams depending on the use they attribute to the connective particle. The first group reads the particle as if it were consistent (either causal or explanatory), while the second group represents a "loose approach" towards γάρ. SC also reviews a couple of monographs whose authors (Elliot and Campbell) pay close attention to the use of γάρ. Campbell, for example, would represent a "loose approach" while Elliot would be more "consistent", reading the particle as a subordinating conjunction in a close relationship with what precedes.

SC's study of the linguistic approach to γάρ distinguishes between a discourse-analytic approach and a cognitive-pragmatic approach. The first stresses the confirmatory role of γάρ (thereby strengthening previous information provided by the text) but stops short of dealing with its cognitive, inferential undertone. One must note that SC takes the notion of procedural meaning from the cognitive-pragmatic approach. This notion may facilitate the comprehension of all languages because it involves not only decoding but also inferences. Different from conceptual meaning, which deals mainly with concepts, procedural meaning includes the linguistic representation of instructions that guide the audience to articulate different inferences. Procedural meaning shows the process that enables an audience to understand a concept, rather than the concept itself. SC's approach to procedural meaning relies on two previous studies (Stephanie Black, *Sentence Conjunctions in the Gospel of Matthew: καί, δέ, γάρ, οὐν, and Asyndeton in Narrative Discourse* [JSNTSup 216; Sheffield 2002] and Margaret Sim, *Marking Thought and Talk in New Testament Greek*. New Light from Linguistics on the Particles ἵνα and ὅτι [Eugene, OR 2010]) which have already attempted to bring biblical studies

and linguistics/pragmatics into closer relationship by applying this notion to the NT connectives.

SC's interdisciplinary methodology articulates a cognitive approach and Relevance Theory, i.e., procedural meaning and inferential communication. According to Relevance Theory, linguistic communication involves two mechanisms: decoding and inference. The principle of relevance makes explicit the inferential comprehension process, i.e., it enables an audience to recognize a set of assumptions. It also permits the identification of different cognitive effects, which result from different inferential procedures. Connectives — like γάρ — facilitate the process of communication since they encode instructions for inferential procedures, indicating strengthening or the introduction of a new inference. According to the Cognitive Approach, procedural meaning is based on the same distinction between decoding and inference, which correspond in turn to a distinction between conceptual information and procedural information. The procedural approach has the advantage of explaining textual difficulties when the relationship with the context is obscure. It helps by understanding that connectives — like γάρ — encode processing instructions, not concepts.

SC acknowledges that Relevance Theory stresses “the role of the addressees’ interpretative process in fulfilling those informative intentions by inferring a relevant interpretation”. SC also notes that the addressees “make use of contextual assumptions and inferences in order to fill in the gaps left by the textual clues, inferences that may be different from those of the first audience” (42). As a result, “there is no guarantee of the validity of the proposed reconstructions of cognitive environments, contextual assumptions, and inferences drawn by the first addressees” (44). SC aims for probability and plausibility in such a reconstructive work and calls for a basic attitude of humility since textual intentions cannot be decoded, only inferred. This cautious attitude is not consistent throughout the entire monograph, especially when SC deals with the exegesis of Rom 1,18 and when SC puts forward the main theme of the letter.

In Chapters 3–6 SC presents some selected examples of the procedural approach applied to Romans, namely of the strengthening guidance of γάρ in some texts. SC's analysis of these occurrences is categorized into three types: straightforward, somewhat complex, and problematic. In Chapter 3 SC illustrates the procedural approach applied to some straightforward instances of γάρ (8,2; 10,10; 2,11; 13,1.8) and to some complex cases, either in expository (7,7-20) or hortatory (14,1-12) material. In all these cases the chain of γάρ clauses has a cumulative strengthening effect. In Chapter 4 SC studies some problematic examples (2,25; 5,6-7; 9,11-12; 7,1; 6,19-20; 15,24). In these occurrences γάρ triggers a flexible strengthening procedure; it “functions as a broad interpretative constraint within which different addressees and interpreters work, using contextual information, to infer an interpretation that is relevant to them, bringing them adequate cognitive effects” (169). In Chapter 5 SC presents two test cases (4,1-2; 10,4-5) in which a procedural account at the micro level of exegesis helps to clarify interpretative impasses and contested ambiguities. The analysis of γάρ in 4,2a allows the reader to grasp the coherence of the context (in this case, the linguistic environment of Abraham). Like Barclay, SC believes that 4,1-2 deals with the “standard recognition” of Abraham as the physical ancestor of the Jews, *before* redefining his fatherhood in universal terms: “the ancestor of all who believe without being circumcised” (4,11, NRSV). The procedural account of γάρ in 10,4-5 elucidates

the relationship between v. 4 and vv. 5-8; whether the expression τέλος γάρ νόμου is to be interpreted as temporal, teleological, or completive, and whether the expression εἰς δικαιοσύνην indicates purpose, means, or consequence. SC concludes that Christ is the *goal* or *fulfilled intention* of the law; v. 5 and vv. 6-8 should not be read in antithesis but in continuity with each other.

In Chapter 6 SC shows the relevance of the procedural account at the macro level of Romans by tracing Paul's argument in 1,15-18 and 15,7-13. SC believes, for example, that Rom 1,15-18 are inextricably linked by the chain of γάρ. The series of γάρ clauses in vv. 16b-18 reinforces the evidence of v. 16b and that increases, in turn, the importance of v. 16a. Therefore vv. 16-17 are to be understood as strengthening material in the context of Paul's wish to preach "his" (non-anti-Jewish) gospel in Rome, "rather than regarded as an isolated thesis statement that summarizes a gospel of justification by faith and thereby announces the epistle's theme" (243). For its part, Rom 15,7-13 emphasizes the inclusion of Jews and gentiles in God's plan alike and simultaneously the priority of Jewish people. SC demonstrates that the personal pronoun ὑμᾶς in v. 7 refers to both Gentile and Jewish addressees. For the Christological premise inferred from v. 8 certainly includes the Gentiles and Paul's Jewish audience. Therefore, the strengthening provided by the γάρ clause in vv. 8-9a confirms that v. 7a is an exhortation to Jewish and Gentile believers. The scriptural catena is a further confirmation of the exhortation to mutual acceptance. SC thus concludes that Paul's aim in 15,5-13 "is to build mutual understanding between Jewish-orientated and Gentile-orientated tendencies in Rome, confronting ethnocentrism and factionalism among believers" (258).

The reconstruction of plausible inferences sometimes allows SC to distinguish the argumentative forest from the trees. However, the reconstruction of such inferences "is undertaken in full recognition of the inherent subjectivity and uncertainty of the task and the possible charge of circularity" (59). This awareness does not prevent SC from inferring controversial assumptions, for example, in the attempt to understand the main thesis of Romans. The movement from micro level exegesis to macro level interpretation of Rom 1,15-18 allows SC to call into question the scholarly consensus regarding the main thesis of the letter. Yet at the same time, SC's reading involves an overlapping between first and second audience, requiring an additional assumption from the reader: Paul would be providing a response to those who may have considered his gospel to be anti-Jewish. Taking for granted that this inference (i.e., Paul would be correcting a misperception of his preaching) might be plausible for the second audience, SC assumes its validity for the first audience. Paul would be dealing with some misperceptions and tensions in the community with the purpose of building unity. Unity between Jewish-orientated and Gentile orientated believers may be considered as a consequence of the communal faith in Christ, but conjecturing that the lack of unity in the community explains the main purpose of Romans may overlook other Christological and theological rationales that one may find throughout it. SC certainly demonstrates some advantages of the procedural account of γάρ to clarify difficult passages and contested interpretations of the letter. However, SC's series of strengthening inferences may also lead to controversial conclusions.

Lukas STOLZ, *Der Höhepunkt des Hebräerbriefs*. Hebräer 12,18-29 und seine Bedeutung für die Struktur und die Theologie des Hebräerbriefs (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 463). Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2018. xxiv-527 p. 15.5 × 23. €109,00

In this revised 2017 dissertation from the University of Basel, Lukas Stolz argues that Heb 12,18-29 is the rhetorical and substantive climax of Hebrews, highlighting the relationship between form and content. Stolz structures his analysis in three parts. Part A reviews scholarship, background, and rhetoric. Part B offers a minutely detailed exegesis of Heb 12,18-29. Part C returns to rhetoric and its relation to content, recapitulating the central themes of Hebrews.

Stolz's first chapter reviews the work of scholars who have noted that Heb 12,18-29 is the sermon's climax either rhetorically or substantively, noting the lack of any lengthy study that considers both. He next engages general questions: genre, structure, authorship, date, audience, and purpose. For genre, after working through the issues of homily, sermon, letter, or hybrid, he lands on sermon to the exclusion of homily. He reviews different scholarly arrangements for Hebrews, noting varying criteria, including dogmatic, thematic, rhetorical, or literary. Otherwise, he argues that the author was a Hellenized Jewish Christian connected to Italy; chapter 13 was written by the same hand; and he prefers an early dating, taking Heb 8,4 to be decisive. He believes it was written to a mixed Jewish and Gentile audience in Rome whose Christian commitment was flagging, being lured by Judaism since it was a *religio licita*.

In Part B Stolz breaks down Heb 12,18-29 clause by clause and word by word, checking for relevant usage in classical Greek sources, the LXX, Philo, Josephus, other Second Temple literature, the New Testament, and Hebrews itself. The first two chapters of Part B examine structural issues, particularly demarcating the unit of Heb 12,18-29. Then Stolz turns to the internal divisions of exposition (12,18-24) and exhortation (12,25-29). He breaks the exposition into two sub-units, both of which start with "have come". He further subdivides this unit in a series of *inclusiones* and concentric patterns, the center of which is the word "God". The three main parts — two sub-units of exposition and the exhortation — are well defended; the further breakdowns are more subjective, but as defensible as any other.

Chapter 3 of Part B examines the first sub-unit of the exposition (12,18-21), the first part of the *synkrisis* between Sinai and Zion. Stolz directs the reader through details of grammar, variants, and philological questions, but broader patterns can be discerned. For example, Stolz repeatedly notes the reliance on Deuteronomy 4–5 LXX. Additionally, he rejects the idea that a touchable Sinai presumes a non-sensory Zion. Instead, he argues for a sensible reality in both parts. Why, then, introduce the terminology of touchability? Stolz brings insight from his philological procedure: the use of term in the LXX is to touch something with the hand because one cannot see it due to darkness or blindness; with this background, the differentiation falls on darkness and light. This leads to a surprising element of the book: Stolz refuses to call God's appearance at Sinai a "theophany"; he prefers the term "cratophany", because God is shrouded in darkness, gloom, fire, and a tempest; one cannot directly see or approach God. Even Moses approaches fearfully.

Chapter 4 on Heb 12,22-24 shifts the focus to the other side of the *synkrisis*: Zion. Stolz intricately subdivides this section as seven elements in three parts. One question he raises in this chapter is whether the heavenly Jerusalem in 12,22-24 is a present or future experience. After settling for an eschatological Zion based upon comparative models (4 *Ezra*, Revelation, and, partially, *Jubilees*), he turns to whether Zion will be a heavenly or earthly reality. He traces the motif of the "heavenly Jerusalem" through 1 *Enoch*, 2 *Baruch*, 4 *Ezra*, *Testament of Abraham*, Philo, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Galatians, arguing that it is heavenly in origin, but will be experienced by Jesus' followers on earth. With this in place, he argues that each clause refers to a heavenly origin but earthly future existence. There are other notable elements. His arrangement of this passage makes the word "God" the center, leading to reflections on Hebrews being theocentric rather than Christocentric. Another theme is the contrast between Moses and Jesus as mediator. He claims the contrast is non-polemical, but unfavorable. He argues that it is not anti-Jewish because the old covenant was from God and was correct for its time. The old covenant, moreover, informs Hebrews, creating continuities between old and new.

Another question raised is the relationship between the heavenly sanctuary and the heavenly city. He notes the absence of the temple in Hebrews 12. He considers whether temple is metaphorical or real, ultimately suggesting that as a symbol "for the heavenly unmediated presence of God" (246) it is concurrently real and metaphorical. So why not mention the temple in chapter 12? Stolz suggests that in the future it will be unnecessary and, therefore, absent.

Another link in the chain of his argument is the understanding of Jesus as forerunner and the language of approaching. He suggests a precursory entrance of Jesus in heaven but an earthly ultimate goal, while discussing the perfect tense of "have come" to the heavenly Jerusalem, and what that means: is it mystical, eschatological, prophetic, or cultic? He calls it the proleptic prophetic perfect that will be fully realized at the eschaton. He also considers the pastoral and rhetorical dimensions and rejects the mystical. I am, however, not sure how the proleptic prophetic is different from mystical. He further considers the cultic dimension, which carries over from the source material (Deut 4,11). Finally, while he distinguishes between the heavenly temple and the heavenly Jerusalem, he identifies them as ultimate goals for the believer in the present and the future respectively.

Chapter 6 on the "unshakable kingdom" (Heb 12,25-29) is the final part, which includes two subsidiary blocks: 12,25-27 and 12,28-29. While shifting from exposition to exhortation, this section resembles both of the descriptions of Zion and Sinai. After connecting the cosmic shattering to Jesus' earthly Parousia, Stolz explores what it means that things that will be shaken will be "removed" (*metathesis*). *Metathesis* could mean annihilation, transformation, or change. Annihilation is the typical view. Others see more of a rearranging of the cosmos. Reviewing classical Greek sources, the LXX, Philo, and two previous uses in Hebrews, *metathesis* could be a dislocation or transposition. He settles on a "new creation" argument — new in arrangement, but not in substance — expressed as the heavenly Jerusalem. Stolz also discusses what it means to receive the kingdom in verse 28 and the fearful image of God as a consuming fire in verse 29. He spends more time, however, on what "our God" means. On the one hand, there is a continuity between the God of Sinai and Zion. On the other hand, Stolz wants to emphasize a different relationship between the people and God; in contrast to

Sinai, Jesus' followers have "free, direct, and comprehensive access" (355). Yet, the author uses fire and fear for both: this "menacing" fire of God looks forward to the last judgment and back to Sinai.

In Part C, Stolz returns to structural issues and the relationship between rhetoric and content. In chapter 2 of Part C, he clearly lays out the argument that this section is the highpoint of Hebrews. He lists all the words in the pericope and where they appear throughout Hebrews. The list illustrates how packed this pericope is with the sermon's key terms. Stolz enumerates several "recapitulations", "abstracts", and "resumes" of the sermon's dominant themes that arise in the pericope, solidifying his proof that this was the *inhaltische* climax. He then argues that Heb 12,18-29 is the *peroratio* of Hebrews, turning to classical rhetoric.

The most significant problem with this monograph is its dual personality. Parts A and C work well together and would have demonstrated the thesis. Yet the bulk of the book is the word-for-word exegesis. In reading Part B, I often wondered how it related to Stolz's thesis. Instead, looking at broader patterns in Hebrews and how each of these patterns reach their apogee in chapter 12 would have worked better. This further leads this reader to wonder: why split the rhetorical analysis between Parts A and C, especially since, hundreds of pages later, the reader will no longer recall the overview of rhetorical arrangements? The atomizing exegesis of Part B leads to some of Stolz's most questionable conclusions, which fit together but, to this reader, often seem to contradict the clearest reading of the text. Philology gives us a horizon of readerly expectations, but the author of Hebrews may use concepts, words, and phrases in other ways. Stolz often aligns the eschatology and cosmology of Hebrews with that of Revelation or 4 *Ezra*, especially when considering that, after the heavens and earth are shaken and removed, the heavenly city of Hebrews will descend to a newly constituted earth. Like Revelation, this descended Jerusalem will not have a sanctuary. Yet, Hebrews never clearly indicates that the heavenly world comes down to us; instead, humans are exhorted to go to it: enter the rest, approach the throne, and enter the sanctuary. Earlier and contemporary usages provide a landscape where one can see the author's usage among alternatives. Stolz's refusal to refer to God coming on Sinai as a theophany but as a "cratophany" will raise eyebrows, but it may make sense of the author's argument about divine access, though I do not think it is non-polemical.

Stolz sufficiently argues his primary thesis that Heb 12,18-29 is the rhetorical and substantive climax of Hebrews, and these elements are interrelated. There are shining moments of philological analysis, such as his argument that the heavenly realm in Hebrews is something that could be sensed. The *metathesis* argument was another highlight. The greatest contribution arrives at the end of the book. His extensive review of the key terms and recapitulations found there was stunning. I wonder, however, how such a list compares to other select passages in Hebrews. How often does Hebrews condense so many key concepts and terms? If we found other points where this was the case, would this complicate or strengthen Stolz's thesis?

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Jonathan R. TROTTER, *The Jerusalem Temple in Diaspora. Jewish Practice and Thought during the Second Temple Period* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 192). Leiden, Brill, 2019. x-236 p. 16 × 24. €105

This monograph is a revision of a dissertation, which the author composed under the direction of Prof. James VanderKam at the University of Notre Dame. In his review of research, Trotter describes the prevailing opinion that, throughout the Second Temple period, concern for the Jerusalem temple and its sacrificial rituals was central to Jewish identity in the land of Israel but not in the diaspora. He challenges this thesis by arguing that the temple exercised a greater influence on Jewish life in the diaspora than scholars had previously perceived.

He presents two categories of evidence that testify to the centrality of the temple for Jews in the diaspora: (a) references to journeys that Jews made from the diaspora to Jerusalem either as conveyors of funds to support the temple or as pilgrims; and (b) thematic content in various literary works of the Jewish diaspora in Egypt, which profile the unparalleled importance of the temple for Jewish communities beyond the holy land prior to 70 CE. The book consists of six chapters, which concentrate on these issues in succession: (1) attestations of financial transfers from diaspora communities to the Jerusalem temple; (2) descriptions of pilgrimages that diaspora Jews made to Jerusalem; (3) the preservation of the temple from imperial violation in 2 Maccabees; (4) the authority of the Jerusalem temple over affairs of diaspora Jews in the *Letter of Aristeas*; (5) the parallelism in the divine actions to defend the temple in Jerusalem and to save the Jews in Egypt in 3 Maccabees; and (6) the portrayal of Jerusalem as the mother city of all Jews and the singularity of its temple as symbolizing that there is only one God, according to Philo of Alexandria. In the introduction and conclusion, the author provides summaries of how this study advances diaspora research in the late Second Temple era (from the second century BCE until 70 CE).

In Chapter 1, Trotter's examination of diverse source material leads to his proposal that, late in the second century BCE, John Hyrcanus inaugurated the yearly payment of the half-shekel tax by Jews of the diaspora to support the temple in Jerusalem (cf. Exod 30,11-16). Upon the death of Antiochus VII Sidetes in 129 BCE, Judea increased its independence from Seleucid rule. At this time, the Hasmonean leadership appealed to the Jewish diaspora for funding of temple sacrifices and building maintenance in order to replace the donations, which the Seleucid authorities had formerly supplied. Trotter views the introductory letter in 2 Maccabees as emblematic of Hasmonean initiatives to strengthen ties between the temple and Jews in the diaspora (2 Macc 1,1-9; 124 BCE). He admits, however, that the earliest specific evidence of annual contributions to the temple by diaspora Jews dates to the mid-first century BCE, namely in Cicero's account of Lucius Valerius Flaccus confiscating assets, which were destined for Jerusalem, from four Jewish communities in Asia Minor (*Pro Flacco* 28.67). Josephus and Philo quote imperial documents of Rome that certify the rights of diaspora Jews to collect and convey funds for sustaining the sacrificial rites at the temple in

Jerusalem, in the period from ca., 50 BCE to 50 CE (Josephus, *Ant.* 14, 213-216, 225-227, 244-246; 16, 162-172; Philo, *Legat.* 315). The community at Qumran and the Matthean tradition supply evidence that this tax was collected until 70 CE (Matt 17, 24-27; 4Q159 6-7).

In Chapter 2, Trotter draws upon the writings of Josephus and Philo as well as the Acts of the Apostles in order to illustrate how the dynamics of pilgrimages to Jerusalem by Jews from across the diaspora and the procedures for transmitting funds from the diaspora to the temple combined to infer that affinity for the holy city was a universal feature of Jewish identity. Philo describes Jews converging on Jerusalem from all directions, especially during the pilgrimage festivals of Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot. Such occasions afforded pilgrims opportunities to cultivate a sacred memory of the temple rites and to forge lifelong friendships with fellow Jews from far-flung regions. Josephus comments that the threat of ambush required that pilgrims from the eastern diaspora travel in the company of the community delegates who transported funds to the temple. The need for protection strengthened the bonds of trust among Jews from various quarters. These convoys also welcomed into their midst non-Jews who desired to make the journey to Jerusalem.

In Chapter 3, Trotter argues that 2 Maccabees bears a diaspora pedigree by virtue of its origins in the five-volume work of Jason of Cyrene. The abridged version was reset as a reference point for the two prefatory letters which beckon Jews in Egypt to observe the temple festival of Hanukkah. This three-piece dossier was compiled under Hasmonian aegis in 124 BCE with the aim of advancing John Hyrcanus's designs to identify the Jerusalem temple as the geographical convergence point for all Jews (2 Macc 1, 1-9). The centrality of the temple to the epitomist's storyline is evident in the preservation of the sacred precincts from invasions by Heliodorus at the beginning and Nicanor in the end (3, 1-40; 15, 1-36). The festivals of Hanukkah and Nicanor's defeat celebrate the heroics of Judas Maccabeus in reclaiming and defending the temple from foreign occupation (10, 8-8; 15, 36).

In Chapter 4, Trotter interprets the *Letter of Aristeas* as testimony to the esteem that the Jewish community in Egypt had for Jerusalem and the temple. The narrative depicts the bonds between Jerusalem and Egypt as developing initially in the wake of the deportation of Jews from Israel to Egypt, and subsequently in diplomatic expeditions between the two locales. The journey of the Egyptian delegation to Jerusalem is narrated as a virtual pilgrimage designed to elicit its audience's wonderment at the city and the sacred precincts. The account of the return journey, which focuses on the translators transferring the Torah scroll from Jerusalem to Egypt, indicates that the community in Egypt acknowledged the high priest's authority. The high priest's commissioning of the translators, who were native to Israel, certifies the scriptural status of the Greek translation. Trotter's dating of the *Letter of Aristeas* to the latter half of the second century BCE opens up the possibility that it might reflect a positive response to Hasmonian initiatives to strengthen ties with the Jewish diaspora.

In Chapter 5, Trotter interprets 3 Maccabees as validating the Jewish community in Egypt by depicting its experience of persecution at the hands of Ptolemy IV Philopator as a mirror image of the assault on the Jerusalem temple by the same king (3 Macc 1, 8 – 2, 24; cf. 2, 25 – 7, 23). The divine intervention at the Jerusalem temple confirms that the sacred precincts are the abode of God's name while the manifestation of heavenly agency to rescue Jews from extermination at the

hippodrome near Schedia illustrates the same salvific activity at work for the Jewish community in Egypt. Trotter views the narrative as indicating that the divine presence was available to these diaspora Jews because the community had anchored itself to the temple in Jerusalem. He argues against the view that 3 Maccabees portrays the Jewish community in Egypt as quite sufficient unto itself with minimal dependence on the Jerusalem temple.

In Chapter 6, Trotter summarizes Philo of Alexandria's convictions about the centrality of the temple for all Jews whether in the diaspora or in the homeland. He directs attention to the concern for the temple that shines through the outpouring of grief, on the part of Jews in Egypt, to Caligula's attempt to install an image of himself in the Jerusalem sanctuary (ca. 40 CE) and also to Aulus Avilius Flaccus's earlier attacks on the synagogues in Alexandria (cf. 38 CE). In recounting both events, Philo describes Jerusalem as the mother city and Israel as the homeland for Jews throughout the diaspora (*Leg.* 184-188; cf. *Flacc.* 45-46). Trotter ends the chapter with a description of Philo's techniques for asserting the axial quality of monotheism in the worldview of Judaism. Given that the cosmos is God's temple and the human soul is a habitation of the divine presence, the transcendent singularity of God demands that there be only one material temple in the world and that temple must be in Jerusalem (*Spec.* 1.66-67).

In sum, Trotter presents significant evidence that the Jerusalem temple was an abiding reference point for Jews in the diaspora during the late Second Temple period. He identifies John Hyrcanus as the figure who established the institutional networks that connected Jews throughout the diaspora with the Jerusalem temple and its Hasmonean leadership. This profile of Hyrcanus enables Trotter to apply the experience of the Jews in Egypt to the diaspora in the world at large.

However, Trotter's reading of the Jewish documents, which originated in Egypt, conveys the impression that the diaspora community in that land was characterized by uniformity. His analyses of 3 Maccabees, the *Letter of Aristeeas*, and Philo's assertions on the singularity of the Jerusalem temple, do not admit of varying degrees of loyalty to the Jerusalem temple and the Jewish homeland. But such uniformity does not ring true for Jewish traditions that span some two centuries in a territory which comprised thirty-six nomes. Egypt subsisted as a multicultural society in which Jewish identity was shaped through interactions with Greeks and Egyptians across generations. Moreover, Jewish life in rural areas would not have matched its contours in urban centers.

It is noteworthy that, amid all the concern for the singularity of the Hasmonean temple in Jerusalem, Trotter does not mention the temple of Onias in Heliopolis. The expansiveness of Trotter's investigation into temple funding and pilgrimages by diaspora Jews contrasts with a lack of sufficient nuance in his analyses of the Jewish works formulated in Egypt. Specialists in the field may wish to view such limitations as indicating a need for further research into the diverse expressions of Judaism within Egyptian society throughout the Ptolemaic and Roman eras.

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DSOUZA Richard Francis, “*Yes Lord, I have believed*”. Martha’s Confession in the Fourth Gospel: A Narrative-Critical Analysis. Roma 2020. 132 p. [estratto]

GAMBADATOUN Yemadjro Fiacre G., *Connaître le mystère – Connaître la sagesse*. La γνῶσις et l’unité ecclésiale e cosmique en Éphésiens 3,1-13 (Analecta Biblica - Dissertationes, 229). Roma, Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2020. 337 p.

KIM Youngnam, *La chiamata alla libertà*. Analisi esegetica di Gal 5,1-25. Roma 2020. 101 p. [estratto]

LAZZARO Boris, *Isaia l'oscuro*. Forme dell'oscurità linguistica isaiana e storia della loro recezione nell'attestazione di Is 29 (Analecta Biblica - Dissertationes, 231). Roma, Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2021. 370 p.

LO SARDO Domenico, *Post-priestly Additions and Rewritings in Exodus 35–40*. An Analysis of MT, LXX, and Vetus Latina (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2. Reihe, 119). Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2020. xxi-307 p.

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The following list mentions books on biblical and related topics sent recently to *Biblica*, including those which may not actually be reviewed in this journal. Inclusion of the book on the list is no indication of the editorial opinion concerning it.

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Please address all books and related correspondence to: Editorial Office, *Biblica*, Pontificio Istituto Biblico, Piazza della Pilotta 35, I-00187 Rome, Italy.

Aguirre, Rafael (ed.), *De Jerusalén a Roma*. La marginalidad del cristianismo de los orígenes (Ágora 41). Estella, Editorial Verbo Divino, 2021. 264 p. 15 × 23. €23,00

Dahan, Gilbert, *Étudier la Bible au moyen âge*. Essais d'herméneutique médiévale II (Titre Courant 72). Genève, Librairie Droz, 2021. 340 p. 12 × 19. €22,75

Dürr, Oliver, *Auferstehung des Fleisches*. Umriss einer lebhaften Anthropologie (Studia Oecumenica Friburgensia 91). Münster, Aschendorff Verlag, 2020. vii-175 p. 15.5 × 23. €34,00

Hernández Carracedo, José Manuel, *La caracterización de Jesús en las notas del narrador del evangelio de Juan*. Una guía de lectura para el relato (Asociación Bíblica Española, Monografías Bíblicas 78). Estella, Editorial Verbo Divino, 2020. 373 p. 16 × 24. €35,00

Kass, Leon R., *Founding God's Nation*. Reading Exodus. New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2021. xix-736 p. 16.5 × 24.5. \$40.00

Lambrecht, Jan, *Intended Sense in Scripture II*. Fifty More Exegetical Notes on the NT (2020-2021). Beau Bassin, Scholars' Press, 2021. xi-371 p. 15 × 22. €104,90

Martínez Higuera, Mariela, *Haced discípulos*. El discipulado en el evangelio de Mateo a la luz de la literatura rabínica (Asociación Bíblica Española, Biblioteca Midrásica 39). Estella, Editorial Verbo Divino, 2020. 590 p. 16 × 24. €38,00

Mosetto, Francesco, *Marco nella sinfonia delle Scritture* (Commentari Biblici). Brescia, Editrice Queriniana, 2021. 292 p. 16 × 23. €24,00

Oakes, Peter, *Empire, Economics, and the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI, William B. Eerdmans, 2020. xiii-223 p. 16 × 23.5. \$55.00

Okorie, Ferdinand, *Favor and Gratitude*. Reading Galatians in Its Greco-Roman Context. Lanham, MD, Fortress Academic, 2021. xii-143 p. 16 × 23.5. \$95.00

Panzarella, Salvatore, *Visione del Cristo angelo in Apocalisse*. Assisi, Cittadella Editrice, 2016. 217 p. 14 × 21. €15,50

Panzarella, Salvatore, *Il maestro sposo*. La cristologia delle donne nel Vangelo di Giovanni. Assisi, Cittadella Editrice, 2020. 221 p. 14 × 21. €16,50

Rinaldi, Giancarlo, *Archeologia del Nuovo Testamento*. Un'introduzione (Studi Religiosi). Roma, Carocci editore, 2020. 15 × 22. €29,00

Sánchez Navarro, Luis, *Un cuerpo pleno*. Cristo y la personalidad corporativa en la Escritura (Studia Biblica Matritensia 4). Madrid, Ediciones Universidad San Dámaso. 177 p. 17 × 24. €18,00

Strenková, Iveta, *Devastata è Ninive*. Studio esegetico di Na 3,1-7 alla luce del suo contesto storico-letterario (Studia Biblica Slovaca – Supplementum 4). Bratislava, Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave, 2020. 382 p. 17 × 25. €15,00

Stroup, Christopher, *The Christians Who Became Jews*. Acts of the Apostles and Ethnicity in the Roman City (Synkrisis. Comparative Approaches to Early Christianity in Greco-Roman Culture). New Haven, CT – London, Yale University Press, 2020. xiii-220 p. 15 × 24. \$65.00

NOTICE TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS

With this notice I announce a change in the editorial staff of *Biblica*. For over two decades, from 2000-2020, Professor Nuria Calduch-Benages has exercised dedicated service as Book Review Editor. She has now asked to be relieved of this position in light of her many other responsibilities. On behalf of the entire editorial staff and of our many contributors, reviewers and subscribers, I would like to extend my deepest thanks to Professor Calduch-Benages for her dedication, efficiency and thoughtful care. The book reviews of *Biblica* are among the most appreciated features of the journal, providing in a timely fashion critical evaluations of books covering a wide range of topics in biblical studies. During her years of service, she has established a very effective method of collaboration with our reviewers. With much gratitude for all that Professor Calduch-Benages has contributed to our journal, we extend our best wishes for the happy continuation of her teaching and research.

At the same time, I am pleased to announce the appointment of Joseph Riordan, S.J., as the new Book Review Editor of *Biblica*. Together with the entire editorial staff we pledge our full support as Fr. Riordan takes on this responsibility.

Michael KOLARCIK, S.J., Rector
Pontifical Biblical Institute